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MARXISM
AFTER 100 YEARS

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EDITORIAL NOTES



ON THE CENTENARY OF KARL MARX'S DEATH

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Karl Marx. He died at his home in London on March 14, 1883, and was buried at Highgate cemetery on March 17 in the same grave as his wife Jenny. Present at the funeral were his daughter Eleanor, his friend and collaborator Frederick Engels, son-in-law Charles Longuet, a handful of comrades from the First International and a few family friends. The bourgeois world hardly took notice of the event. Many of the London newspapers, including *The Times*, printed the news of Marx's death by way of reports from their correspondents in Paris, which they thought was the scene of his demise. But at the graveside Engels put the picture right in a few heartfelt words which bear repeating because they sum up the true significance of Marx's life and work:

"An immeasurable loss has been sustained both by the militant proletariat of Europe and America, and by historical science, in the death of this man. The gap that has been left by the departure of his mighty spirit will soon enough make itself felt."

"Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc; that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case."

"But that is not all. Marx also discovered the special law of motion governing the present-day capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois society that this mode of production has created. The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light on the problem, in trying to solve which all previous investigations, of both bourgeois economists and socialist critics, had been groping in the dark."

Marx was the founder of what we today call scientific socialism. "Science was for Marx a historically dynamic, revolutionary force", said Engels. Marx welcomed every new scientific discovery, but he went beyond the boundaries of what was commonly regarded as the domain of pure science, and applied the principles of scientific investigation to the spheres of the economy and historical development in general. It was the study of science which led him to the theory of movement in society, of revolutionary change. Engels emphasised:

"For Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation. Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity and a success such as few could rival."

"His work on the first Rheinische Zeitung (1842), the Paris Vorwärts (1844), the Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung (1847), the Neue Rheinische Zeitung

(1848-49), the New York Tribune (1852-61) and in addition to these a host of militant pamphlets, work in organizations in Paris, Brussels and London, and finally, crowning all, the formation of the great International Working Men's Association — this was indeed an achievement of which its founder might well have been proud even if he had done nothing else.

"And, consequently, Marx was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time. Governments, both absolutist and republican, deported him from their territories. Bourgeois, whether conservative or ultra-democratic, vied with one another in heaping slanders upon him. All this he brushed aside as though it were cobweb, ignoring it, answering only when extreme necessity compelled him. And he died beloved, revered and mourned by millions of revolutionary fellow workers — from the mines of Siberia to California, in all parts of Europe and America — and I make bold to say that though he may have had many opponents he had hardly one personal enemy.

"His name will endure through the ages, and so also will his work!"

Marx was at first buried in a grave with a simple headstone, his daughter Eleanor writing: "Marx did not want a 'memorial'... In the heads and hearts of millions of workers who have 'united' at his call, he has not merely a memorial more lasting than bronze, but also the living soil in which what he taught and desired will become — and in part has already become — an act". Today, however, in response to world-wide demand, he has a memorial in bronze in a more prominent part of Highgate cemetery, and on its plinth are recorded his slogans: "Workers of all lands unite" and "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point however is to change it".

In his speech at the graveside on March 17, 1883, Wilhelm Liebknecht had pledged in the name of the German working class:

"Instead of mourning, we will act in the spirit of the great departed. We will strive to make a reality, as quickly as possible, of what he taught and aspired to. In this way we will best celebrate his memory.

"Dear, dead friend! We will march along the road that you showed us until the end. We swear it on your grave!"

Today tens of millions of people throughout the world are fulfilling that graveside pledge, inspired by Marx's writings not only to think and analyse but also to act to bring about the new order of society which he and his comrades envisaged. In 1917 the stifling curtain of capitalism which enshrouded the world was first torn asunder by the October Revolution

and today the peoples of many lands live under the banner of Marxist socialism, while millions more organise and fight for liberation under the leadership of parties which adhere to Marxist principles. The very fervour with which the memory of Marx is assailed by the enemies of socialism is testimony to the enduring validity of his doctrines.

South African socialists were quick to absorb the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin from the earliest years of this century. The South African Communist Party was founded on Marxist principles and continues to propagate and act upon them to this day. In commemoration of the centenary of Marx's death, we publish in this issue of *The African Communist* a definitive article by Andrew Rothstein "Marxism After One Hundred Years" in which he answers the question: "has the experience of the last hundred years proved Marx's philosophy wrong, or out of date, or inadequate?" In the following issue of *The African Communist* the relevance of Marxism to the struggle for national liberation in the South African context will be discussed by Khumalo Migwe in an article entitled: "Karl Marx and the Colonial Question".

BOTHA'S 'WAY FORWARD' IS A DEAD END

South Africa's murderous raid on Maseru last December in which 42 defenceless men, women and children were slaughtered in cold blood is part of Premier Botha's "total strategy" to subordinate the whole of southern Africa to the domination of the apartheid regime. The South African butchers tried to justify their atrocity by claiming that they acted to forestall a planned Christmas offensive by the ANC who were using Lesotho as a base for attacks on targets in South Africa. They claimed that during the course of the raid they had captured documents to prove this.

Significantly, none of these documents has been published, and no evidence has yet been produced to show that those killed were members of an ANC hit squad. Indeed, at least 11 of them were Lesotho citizens and amongst those mown down by the racist bombs and bullets were women and children, allegedly "killed in the crossfire" but, as eyewitnesses later testified, deliberately murdered by the South Africans who regarded as fair game anything black that came within their sights.

This indiscriminate act of carnage understandably outraged world opinion, and even South Africa's western allies were forced to utter some token words of protest. But the Lesotho raid was no accident or aberration. Far from it. South African murder squads have done the same

before, at Matola in Mozambique, at Cassinga in Angola, and many other places in all the frontline states. White South Africans with blackened faces have crossed the borders of Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland and Zambia on murder or kidnap missions. South African armed and trained gangs like UNITA in Angola, the "Mozambique National Resistance Movement" (MNR), so-called "ZAPU dissidents" in Zimbabwe, the Lesotho Liberation Army etc. murder, maim and destroy on the instructions of their Pretoria paymasters and in the interests of maintaining South African hegemony.

After the Maseru massacre, King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho himself went to the United Nations to appeal for action from the Security Council. South Africa, he charged, had embarked on a deliberate policy of trying to overrun neighbouring states and rule them as colonies. Rejecting South Africa's charge that Maseru was used as a launching pad by units of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, King Moshoeshoe asked how it was that South Africa was openly supported and encouraged by the western powers who professed to be committed to principles of freedom, liberty and equality. He called on the Security Council to "restrain South Africa from violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of UN member states and from pursuing a strategy of naked terrorism against a whole sub-continent".

The Security Council duly passed a vote of condemnation but did not commit itself to anything in the way of punishment or sanctions. Yet South Africa's repeated acts of aggression and destabilisation are not only causing enormous economic damage in all the frontline states but are increasing tension and leading to a state of confrontation which threatens peace in Africa and the world. The seriousness of the situation was stressed at the sessions of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC) attended by 600 delegates from the nine member states (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe), liberation movements, donor countries and international aid agencies held in Maseru at the end of January.

The destruction caused in the frontline states by the attacks of South African troops and their agents on dams, powerlines, oil installations, railway lines and the civilian population was deplored and condemned. But, said the chairman of the SADCC Council of Ministers, Botswana Vice-President Peter Mmusi, "sympathy is not enough". There was no point in developing the infrastructure of the frontline states and then "to watch in silence as they are blown up".

The Southern African liberation movements and their allies have no intention of watching in silence while Botha's butchers go on the rampage. Within days of the Maseru massacre, units of Umkhonto we Sizwe had blown up the nuclear plant under construction at Koeberg, causing damage so severe that plans to bring the reactor on stream earlier this year had to be abandoned. Afterwards there were controlled explosions at the Johannesburg magistrate's court, the Durban Supreme Court, government offices in Port Elizabeth, a railway bridge in the Orange Free State and various other incidents, not all of them disclosed by the authorities or reported in the press. From the very nature of all these activities it is clear that units of MK are operating freely inside South Africa, in both the rural and urban areas. It is not possible to launch an attack on Koeberg from a base in Maseru 1,000 miles away.

At a time when the Botha regime is making it plain that the total exclusion of the African majority from the body politic — indeed the total abolition of their right to citizenship — remains a basic plank of government policy, there is no alternative to the plan of action which has been advanced by the African National Congress. And opinion polls show that the ANC enjoys massive support amongst the oppressed peoples of South Africa and that more and more people in all sections of the community are identifying with the ANC and its programme of principles enshrined in the Freedom Charter.

In the no confidence debate at the beginning of this session of Parliament, government leaders, including Defence Minister Magnus Malan, called their opponents terrorists, communists, agents of the Soviet Union etc. and threatened the frontline states with invasion if they continued to harbour South African refugees. But more and more people even in the ranks of the whites are beginning to realise that the source of the confrontation and violence which is engulfing Southern Africa lies in the government's policy of white domination. In an editorial on January 3 the *Rand Daily Mail* asked:

"What drives South Africans in such numbers to leave their country to go and seek training so that they can later return home and wreak havoc? How much frustration and humiliation are suffered before someone finally breaks and decides to try the way offered abroad? How long before someone decides that, denied the means of bringing about change through the ballot box, he is going to embrace violence?"

It is, of course, the denial by the white minority to the black majority of equal citizenship and the right to vote which is the primary act of violence

in our country, a fundamental act of tyranny and injustice imposed by force of arms and maintained by an ever-growing military and police budget which is not only swallowing up millions of rands which could more profitably be spent on education and social welfare but is also leading South Africa into ever widening aggression against its own people and the independent frontline states.

In an interview with the *Financial Mail* on December 24, 1982, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Dennis Hurley was asked about the SADF policy of 'hot pursuit' across international borders. He replied:

"This brings us to the question of military strategy versus political strategy. If you accept that the policies of white South Africa are justifiable, then obviously you justify the military strategy to defend and promote them. The question for me is: 'Is the political strategy of South Africa defensible?' I don't think it is. I can't accept it because it's too blatant and obvious an example of the oppression of one people by another. There's always going to be a reaction to it and a reaction against that reaction and so we are into a spiral of violence that has its source in the injustice of the South African system".

Asked: "Do you regard South Africa's war against urban terrorism as just?", Archbishop Hurley replied:

"It depends on what has caused the war. If the war is the result of a reaction of people who are being unjustly oppressed, then I think the real blame lies with those who are guilty of the oppression. This is what is known as structural violence — that is, violence built into the political structures of a country by which those in authority oppress their subjects and subordinates".

The question is now being posed whether Premier Botha, with his new 'power-sharing' constitutional proposals, is not abandoning the political structures of violence and starting out on the road to democracy. The answer is a categorical "No". Botha's new proposals are a device to consolidate white domination — and he sold it as such to the congresses of the Nationalist Party which endorsed them. They exclude the African majority. And even with the inclusion of the Coloureds and Indians in their separate parliaments, the new proposals preserve white numerical supremacy and, within the white group, the supremacy of the ruling Nationalist Party. It is for this reason that Botha's proposals have been totally rejected by all sections of African opinion and the most representative organisation amongst the Coloured and Indian people. The decision of the Coloured Labour Party and a handful of Indian stooges to

take part in this 'power sharing' pantomime can only be described as an act of treachery and betrayal by opportunists willing for reward to implement the regime's policy of divide and rule.

TIME TO WORK FOR PEACE

We have frequently pointed out in this journal that Soviet efforts for peace and disarmament began with the 1917 revolution and have continued unceasingly ever since. With equal consistency the Soviet proposals have been rebuffed by the imperialist powers, who have never given up their dream of "destroying the Bolshevik baby in its cradle". Just how far the United States is prepared to go was revealed in a letter written to NATO secretary general Dr Joseph Luns by Alexander Haig at the time of his resignation in June 1979 as Supreme Allied Commander. Haig wrote, in part:

"As you know, one of our presuppositions in nuclear planning is that, under certain circumstances likely to develop in Europe, we may be forced to make first use of nuclear weapons. . . We will never be able to put into effect our joint plans in this vital area unless quite exceptional efforts are made to check European tendencies toward neutralism, pacifism and unilateralism. . . If argument, persuasion and impacting the media fail, we are left with no alternative but to jolt the fainthearted in Europe through the creation of situations, country by country as deemed necessary, to convince them where their interests lie. This would call for appropriate and effective action of a sensitive nature which we have frequently discussed. . . The courses of action which we have in mind may become the only sure means of securing the interests of the West".

The full text of the letter was published in the *Morning Star*, organ of the Communist Party of Great Britain, dated February 5, 1983.

What Haig means is that every dirty trick in the book must be employed to whip up anti-Soviet hysteria amongst Europeans naturally fearful that they will be the first victims of any nuclear conflict. Now we no longer need to wonder why the Thatcher government is so assiduous at discovering and expelling alleged Soviet spies against whom no shred of evidence is ever presented; or why Bulgaria is accused (and behind Bulgaria the KGB) of attempting to assassinate the Pope; or why such a fake hullabaloo is made

over the disintegration of a Soviet satellite which Moscow correctly predicted would burn up in the atmosphere but which the western media presented as a threat to all humanity; or why General Jaruzelski is presented as an unmitigated villain against whom sanctions must continue despite the lifting of martial law, while the butcher Pol Pot is honoured with a seat at the United Nations and the murderous regimes of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador are reported to have "made progress in the sphere of human rights" and so qualified for increased US military aid. And so on and so on. The stream of baseless slander against the Soviet Union, the other socialist countries and the international communist movement is endless precisely because it is calculated to advance the interests of the military-industrial complexes who control the government and the media of the capitalist countries.

A prize example of this western mendacity and duplicity was presented by US Vice-President Bush on his tour of Europe earlier this year to do precisely what Haig had recommended to Luns — "make exceptional efforts to check European tendencies towards neutralism, pacifism and unilateralism". Criticising the alleged Soviet arms build-up over the past 10 years, Bush complained: "The Russians had rejected all American attempts at arms limitation over the course of many years". (*The Times* February 1, 1983).

What brazen hypocrisy! The only American offer made in the last 10 years has been Reagan's 'zero option', which amounts to unilateral Soviet disarmament in the sphere of intermediate nuclear weapons, leaving France and Britain free to have as many nuclear weapons as they please, while the US in return would only undertake not to instal Cruise and Pershing weapons in Europe. Even the West German Chancellor Kohl had to admit that the 'zero option' was totally unrealistic and no basis for serious negotiation.

In reply to Bush, one might ask: what happened to the SALT 2 agreement to limit strategic nuclear weapons which the US government under both Carter and Reagan refused to ratify? And what notice has the US taken of the stream of real offers made by the Soviet Government in the last few months? These include:

1. USSR and NATO to cut their intermediate range weapons by more than two-thirds.
2. USSR to keep in Europe only as many missiles as are kept there by Britain and France.
3. Cut to equal levels aircraft carrying intermediate range nuclear weapons stationed in the region by the USSR and NATO.

4. USSR and US to cut strategic nuclear weapons by more than 25%.
5. 300-mile-wide nuclear-free corridor across Europe.
6. Indian Ocean and outer space to be declared nuclear-free zones.

To all of these the US has made no response. In addition the Soviet Union has unilaterally pledged never to be the first to use nuclear weapons, but the US has consistently refused to make a similar declaration, and Haig's letter to Luns makes it clear why.

The US intention to wage war was pointed up by the budget Reagan presented to Congress at the end of January increasing 'defence' spending by 10% and slashing education and social programmes to pay for it. No wonder all Europe is terrified of the US, and the campaigns for nuclear disarmament are growing by leaps and bounds. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury protested:

"When disarmament initiatives are produced by whatever government, it is frightening to hear immediate dismissive responses. It is becoming incredible to write off every Soviet suggestion as a propaganda ploy. To do so underestimates the extent to which everyone has an interest in seeing the present tensions relaxed". (The Times, January 26, 1983.)

We in South Africa have a special interest in seeing international tensions relaxed. The liberation of the oppressed peoples of Namibia and South Africa is being held back, the independence of the frontline states undermined and the peace of the entire region threatened by western measures to involve South Africa in their preparations for war. Now that the Botha regime has acquired a nuclear weapons capacity, South Africa is no longer a country far removed from the danger of nuclear confrontation or fall-out. On the contrary, the Botha militarist regime is at this moment engaged in aggression against its neighbours which can escalate into continental war, and every step it takes is being encouraged by the imperialists as part of their global strategy. Our "little border war" can easily be fanned into a world-wide conflagration unless we take steps to stop it.

South Africa needs an organised peace movement, and needs it badly. All the signs are that wide sections of our people would support a peace initiative. The time has come to make a start.

MARXISM AFTER ONE HUNDRED YEARS

By Andrew Rothstein

"Marx died a hundred years ago", wrote an elegant philosophical word-spinner (not British, I may say) a few weeks ago — and proceeded to put up and demolish a series of Aunt Sallies about "living" and "dead" Marxism, on that basis. "What does it mean when you say you are a Marxist...hasn't humanity discovered anything new in these hundred years...you don't say you're a Galileist when you work in physics...you may be making Marx's name the emblem of a doctrine...a rational attitude to the world doesn't allow Marxist philosophy to draw from certain physical phenomena a few unshakeable lessons on the march of history" — and so on, like Marguerite's spinning-wheel in Gounod's *Faust*.

But it so happens that at the very graveside of Karl Marx on March 17, 1883, his great fellow-worker Frederick Engels already pointed out that Marx welcomed, even rejoiced in, every new discovery in science, industry and historical development in general — quite apart from the two great discoveries he himself had made: the role of "the production of the immediate material means of subsistence" as the foundation of all the activities of society, and the role of surplus value in the present-day capitalist mode of production.

Engels however pointed out what a legion of word-spinners like the one quoted above will have avoided pointing out when 1983 is over, whether claiming to be Marxist themselves or to have risen above Marx's achievements:

"Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the State institutions which it had brought into being, to

contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation".

And had not Marx himself set out his life's aim nearly forty years before, when still a young man of 27, in his famous comment on the materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (now inscribed on the tomb at Highgate Cemetery): "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point however is to change it"?

In short, Marxism is a guide to revolutionary action against capitalism — not to contemplation merely, or even mainly. The question is: has the experience of the last hundred years proved Marx's philosophy wrong, or out of date, or inadequate?

To answer these questions, one has to look at how the real world has changed.

First change. In 1883 the world was dominated by six great capitalist powers (Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, United States), reinforced in the course of years by the appearance of a seventh powerful capitalist state (Japan) and several minor capitalist states (Italy, Holland, Belgium). All became to a greater or less degree imperial colonialist Powers, exporting finance-capital. But today it has become a world in which a great hole has been torn in the web of imperialism. The October Socialist Revolution in the Russian Empire, carried out by the proletariat under the leadership of the Communist Party, put an end to Russian finance-capital and imperialist colonialism, replacing them by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In 1945 the overthrow of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan made possible the appearance of a number of further socialist states in Asia and Europe, later reinforced by yet another socialist country in the western hemisphere. The socialist economy of the Soviet Union, despite many difficulties as it grew more powerful, proved able even to support these new socialist states at critical moments of their foundation and growth: so that now there is a community of socialist nations, with 33% of the world's population and 40% of world industrial output. Moreover, in this community, for the first time in human history, the full benefits of education, culture in all its forms, science and technology have been placed effectively at the disposal of the whole people, without distinction of sex, nationality or social position.

Second change. As a result of this immense blow to imperialism, scores and scores of largely peasant nations, held subject, exploited and ignorant by the imperialist Great Powers in 1883, have been able at two stages —

first after 1917, then after 1945 — not only to win political independence under the leadership of more or less democratic national liberation movements, but also to begin the even more difficult task of winning economic independence, and to take the first step towards rising in all social and cultural spheres to the level of the more advanced countries.

The initiative in the first instance was taken by the Communist Parties in many countries after the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, which on Lenin's suggestion widened the call of Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* to "Workers and Oppressed Peoples of all Countries, Unite!". Such ex-colonial or developing countries now total 49% of the world's population with 7% of its industrial output. Some have deliberately made the first effort to begin development towards socialist society: the majority as yet are still attempting to build their own native capitalist system.

These changes, brought about in less than seventy years, have come after decades, even centuries, during which any noticeable effort to throw off the yoke of foreign plunderers or of their native allies was met with bloody repression. Moreover, in many cases the liberated peoples have been aided economically, socially and even militarily, when necessary and possible, by the socialist nations. The remaining section, 18% of the world's population, consists of the remaining imperialist powers of Europe and Asia, North America and South Africa and their not very numerous colonies and semi-colonies. Yet even in these there appear from time to time outbursts of revolt, as in South Africa or Puerto Rico. Moreover in these countries the struggle of the people also proceeds in the main under the leadership of anti-imperialist national liberation movements, such as were doomed to bloody suppression a century ago.

Third change. During the first thirty years after 1883, the expanding group of imperialist countries were competing among themselves for markets, using for that purpose all improvements in science and technology, both in their economy and in improving their capacity for war. This competition took a new and catastrophic form when war broke out among them in 1914. For the first time since modern capitalism came into existence in the nineteenth century, hundreds of millions of people learned by the overthrow of three great military empires in 1914-1918 that capitalist rule need not be eternal — and that as in Russia, the proletariat could successfully replace the landowners and capitalists as the ruling class. In this narrowed field, when peace had been re-established among the surviving Great Powers, the victorious capitalist states began (even

during the war) to prepare for still fiercer competition among themselves. The competition was stimulated by yet further successes in the development of new technologies, the tapping of new sources of energy, the opening-up of still more unexpected sources of raw material.

The capitalist world, that is to say, entered with the first world war into a condition of general crisis. Did this crisis diminish in the next thirty years? On the contrary, it reached a higher stage. It produced European convulsions such as had not been known in the continent since the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and wars against the French Revolution and Napoleon's attempt to dominate Europe (1792-1815). The years 1919-1939 saw the rise of Fascism in Italy and Germany, its first conquests in Europe and Africa, the huge conquests of Japan in China, the constant efforts to turn Fascist aggression against the one Socialist State and finally the second world war. The scale of this advancing crisis of capitalism can indeed be measured from all its aspects by two figures: 10 million dead in the first world war, over 50 million dead in the second.

In the last period of nearly forty years (1945-1983) the struggles of capitalism in crisis have taken a still more acute form. On the one hand, there has taken place the attempted, and partially effective, concentration and subjugation of all national economies and state policies in the capitalist world by those of a single would-be "super-imperialist" Power — the United States — having as its material basis a vast concentration of capital in the hands of its trusts and banks (with extensions all over the world in the shape of "multinational" corporations). On the other hand, the attempted organisation of the forces of all the capitalist countries in NATO for war on the socialist world — despite the still further narrowing of the capitalist part of the globe since 1954 — has meant a colossal increase in essentially unproductive expenditure on armaments, and therefore a deepening economic crisis in each capitalist country.

Fourth change. The deepening capitalist crisis and the intensifying search for profit everywhere have, as in all previous periods of capitalism, stimulated and speeded up technical developments of all kinds, particularly in the extremely profitable field of armaments, to which the scientific achievements, e.g. nuclear fission, have been subordinated. The Soviet Union has been able to bring about these developments even faster, both in science and in technology, using itself the age-old search for economy in the use of labour, in the interests of humanity as a whole and without its stimulus in the search for profit. It has been able to turn the scientific discoveries directly into new forces of production — such as the

peaceful use of atomic power, the use of space research for discovery of the new resources on earth, and the use of lasers.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union itself has also been forced to use part of its national resources unproductively, in the interests of defence against the open threats of war by the NATO powers and their refusal to accept or even consider the numerous Soviet offers of mutually agreed abolition, or drastic reduction, of nuclear and conventional armaments, armed forces and defence budgets. As a consequence, the world in fact is burdened with such a concentration of the means of mutual destruction — and the destruction of all life on earth — as never existed before.

Fifth change. In the course of these vast transformations, the working class of all countries has made tremendous advances in political understanding and massive organisation. Trade unions throughout the world had barely 14 million members in 1914 and 65 millions in 1939: by 1981 they had nearly 290 million members. Of these, over half were in the socialist states, for the most part playing an active part in running the economy and the political institutions of the country. In the advanced capitalist countries, parallel with the expansion of trade unionism, political parties with more or less socialist programmes have more than once formed governments with parliamentary support, sometimes based on absolute majorities in Parliaments, and particularly since the end of the second world war. In most of the former colonies where national liberation movements have triumphed, sweeping democratic reforms broadly aimed at producing a more just society have been included in the programmes of the governments in power (though not everywhere put into effect).

Over these hundred years, moreover, the trade unions in many countries have secured certain improvements in the conditions of the wage-earners, and the governments mentioned have done the same for the working people at large. However, in not a single case have the parliamentary governments with socialist programmes formed in the capitalist countries been able to deprive the capitalist class of its economic power and ultimate political influence — and on more than one occasion the advances secured by the trade unions, or by governments with socialist programmes, have been whittled down, or even wiped out for years — sometimes by violent

Sixth change. The century since Marx's death has seen the rise and partial decline of a series of attempts to arrest the spread of his ideas among the working class, coming not always directly from the numerous ideological agencies of the capitalist class, but from within the progressive

movement itself. At the end of the nineteenth century, the main features of the new imperialist phase in the working movement has appeared in all the more advanced capitalist countries. Out of the higher profits secured by the export of capital to the less advanced countries, where labour was cheap and raw materials abundant, a minority of skilled workers in the imperialist countries could by industrial struggles win improvements in wages and working conditions, housing and other living standards, and even certain political rights.

As a result (by the side of a mass of unemployment and miserable living standards for the majority of workers in those countries, not to speak of conditions in the colonial territories), the favoured section in such countries of Europe and America as have been mentioned was able to build up legally a vast machinery of labour organisation, both trade union and political, which could operate from time to time to win some concession even for the less favoured majority.

On this basis, a whole school of thought and action grew up through the socialist parties themselves, as well as among trade union functionaries, the essence of which was rejection of Marx's revolutionary ideas as outdated. It substituted the idea of reconciliation of classes and of an advance towards socialism by essentially peaceful methods, which it now considered possible. This movement was international in its scope, ranging from the idea of peaceful "permeation" of capitalism by the socialists (the Fabian Society in Britain) to "revision" of Marxist "dogma" within the Social-Democratic parties of Europe and "liquidation" of illegal activity against Tsardom by the Menshevik Social-Democrats in Russia. Its ideas were first brought together in a book by Bernstein, *Premises of Socialism* (1899), written after spending some years in England and studying the work of the Fabian Society there. Although combated in a number of countries, this revisionism gained ground after the defeat of the first Russian Revolution in 1905, and culminated in the betrayal of socialism by most of its leaders in 1914. This in its turn led to the break-up of the old Socialist International (1889-1914), followed by the formation on the left of the Communist International (1919-1943), and on the right by the reappearance of a new Socialist International after 1945, now definitely non-Marxist or anti-Marxist. The leadership of this new body as a rule has confined itself when in office in the various countries to administering the capitalist system with certain reforms.

In this way, divisions and antagonisms among the capitalist Great Powers, and their common opposition to the Soviet Union and its socialist

allies, have become reflected in the ranks of the organised working class as well. In the course of the years since the second world war a few Communist Parties entered upon yet a new form of revisionism, generally labelled (not quite correctly) "Eurocommunism". Its main tenets and practices included (i) repudiation of any connection with Marxism-Leninism, and in some cases even with Marxism itself; (ii) repudiation, not simply of the words "dictatorship of the proletariat" but of their essence — the rule of the working class and its organisations, as the *core* of a broad popular alliance around the leadership of the working class, in order decisively to end the rule of monopoly capitalism; (iii) public attacks on those Soviet policies which they saw as not conforming with their own conceptions of democracy; (iv) adaptation, to a greater or lesser degree, of their current policies to those of other parties, competing with them in political life, which do not repudiate capitalist rule, much less imperialism.

A Plan Fulfilled

Of course there have been other changes in human society during the last century. But the six changes here listed cover the fields in human life which count most, in Marx's view. And the question is: have these changes altered the significance of Marx's teachings, or made necessary a change in our attitude to Engels' summing up at the graveside of Marx's impressive message to the world?

1. The Soviet Union. Already in the *Communist Manifesto*, making their first historic call to the working men of all countries, Marx and Engels proclaimed:

"The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class: and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible."

Restating this for the benefit of the Anarchists, a month after Marx's death, Engels added for greater precision that the working class state thus set up would "carry out that economic revolution of society without which the whole victory must end in a new defeat, and in a mass slaughter of the workers similar to those after the Paris Commune".

No one who looks objectively at what has happened in what was formerly Tsarist Russia, between 1917 and 1988, can doubt that that is precisely what has been fulfilled.

The working class, led by the Bolsheviks, overthrew the government of Kerensky and his capitalist colleagues on November 7, 1917. Successfully it nationalised the land, the banks, the forests and all mineral wealth: it cancelled all loans concluded by the Tsarist government and the bourgeois governments of 1917: it took over all foreign trade: it established workers' supervision (control) in all industrial enterprise, and then through a Supreme Economic Council and the local Soviet authorities carried out confiscation or requisitioning of all basic industrial enterprise by the summer of 1918.

These economic measures were accompanied by the proclamation that all political power was henceforth vested in the Soviets — the councils of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies: a measure which "won the battle of democracy" by vastly extending the actual numbers of the common people drawn into the process of government, and making them responsible for management. Similarly, workers' control in the factories, management of unemployment insurance and of labour exchanges, the drafting of collective agreements, and a decisive voice in the running of the Supreme Economic Council itself, were put firmly in the hands of the trade unions. The armed forces of the country at that stage were reorganised under the control of officers drawn, from top to bottom, from the ranks of the revolutionary workers and peasants — with officers of the old armed forces acting as advisers if they declared their loyalty to the new system. The old police were disbanded and replaced by a militia controlled by the local Soviet.

This was the initial machinery by which the working class put into effect its "political supremacy" or dictatorship — exercised however in a class alliance with the peasantry, the vast majority of the people of Soviet Russia, and against the landowners, the capitalists, their internal agents and foreign patrons, who began attacking Soviet Russia immediately on a large scale. This machinery was reflected in due course, with necessary modifications as the people grew more active in public affairs, by a Constitution which abolished all discrimination between working people and former exploiters. The resultant system has brought the Soviet Union after 65 years close to the declared aims of the *Communist Manifesto* — "a vast association of the whole nation".

The Soviet Achievement

And what about "the total of productive forces"? The answer is provided by their actual state today, whether compared with the United States — the only capitalist country in the world to which the USSR comes second in production (though superior in many branches), or with the highest level ever reached by Tsarist Russia. The Soviet Union was responsible for 20% of world industrial output in 1980, against just over 4% in 1913: output of grain three times as great as in 1913, other agricultural produce four, five and even more times as great, with one-third of the numbers who were engaged in agriculture in 1913. In these and other spheres of the economy, the socialist community created in the USSR by the application of Marx's principles has justified them completely. As for education, science, culture and technology, any detailed comparison shows even more dramatic changes.

Every one of the other nations in the socialist community has demonstrated without possibility of doubt that, by following the same broad method set forth by Marx — expropriating the landlords and capitalists and replacing their rule by that of the workers and peasants, constantly participating in public affairs — it is moving rapidly along the same road. Each of these nations has had, and is having its own particular problems in doing so: the Soviet Union had them too in its early years. And each of them has found, and is still finding, that the existence of a malignantly hostile imperialist environment unfailingly makes these problems worse: so did the Soviet Union, with foreign invasions taking up ten years out of its life, and organised disruption by foreign agents at other times. But anyone who looks fairly at what the socialist nations started with (those in Europe in 1944-5; Mongolia in Far Eastern Asia in 1924 and Vietnam in South-East Asia in 1946; Cuba in 1959, etc.) will see an immense advance in all decisive spheres, despite ups and downs.

Of course they did not win this situation by voting at peaceful elections, unfortunately. They had to "win the battle of democracy" to bring in the rule of the people — by force of arms every one of them. But this was not by their own choice. It was by the choice of the old ruling classes, whose governments in every case not only refused a free choice but on the contrary used every accessible means of massacre and terrorism, usually with active support by the "western democracies", to resist popular advance.

And even after socialism was established in these countries, they had great trials to face, not only of their own making, but forced on them from outside. This Engels already foreshadowed in September 1882, in a well

known letter to Karl Kautsky (then a Marxist). Discussing the future of "semi-civilised countries" who would follow in the wake of a socialist Europe, Engels said it was idle to speculate on what social and political stages they would have to pass through.

"One thing alone is certain: the victorious proletariat can force no blessing of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing. Which of course by no means excludes defensive wars of various kinds".

The imperialist governments, who were themselves defeated in their invasions of Soviet Russia in 1917-1922, cannot forgive the Soviet Union for being victorious in the defensive war which Hitler with their connivance forced upon it, and thereafter helping the working class in the formerly Fascist-ruled border states, from Finland to Rumania, to set up socialist governments in their turn. Later by organising armed raids continuously throughout 1980 over the borders of Afghanistan they forced defensive measures upon the Soviet Union — for which again they cannot forgive it.

2. The Workers' Class Allies. The proposition that the political vanguard of the working class should turn to allies in "the overthrow of capitalist society", although brought forward by Lenin in Soviet practice from 1918 onwards and internationally in 1920, as stated earlier, was in reality put forward by Marx as well.

As early as 1850, in *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850*, Marx made an analysis of the reasons for the defeat of the Paris proletariat two years before. He wrote that

"the Paris workers could not take a step forward, could not touch a hair of the bourgeois order, until the course of the revolution had aroused the mass of the nation — peasants and petty-bourgeois, standing between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie — against this order, against the rule of capital".

This step forward of course they had no time to make before they were crushed. In his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (March 1852) Marx described the lot of the mass of the French peasantry, half a century after they had broken up aristocratic landowning in the great Revolution — transformed into "troglodites", living in "hovels, large numbers of which have but one opening". He went on:

"The interests of the peasants, therefore, are no longer as under Napoleon in accord with, but in opposition to the bourgeoisie, to capital. Hence the peasants find their natural ally and leader in the urban proletariat. whose task is the overthrow of the bourgeois order".

Again, in July 1853, in his article *The Future Results of British Rule in India*, Marx had foreseen that the peoples of India would not be able to take advantage of the economic changes begun as a result of British bourgeois rule over them (the beginning of capitalist development) "until in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or until the Hindoos themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether".

In a letter to Engels (April 1856) Marx pointed the same lesson for another, still mainly peasant country, Germany. "The whole thing in Germany will depend upon the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasants' War" (i.e. of the peasant insurrections against feudalism in the sixteenth century).

In the paper about British rule in India, Marx had written that India was "the Ireland of the East" — and at bottom he saw similarity in the essential class problem of the two countries: the need for an agrarian revolution, in which the Irish peasantry like the Indian should find the British working class as its ally.

Long before this, Marx and Engels had in essence pointed to the same problem in Poland, at that time partitioned under Russia, Prussia and Austria. In Poland, they wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*, the Communists "support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation" (citing in particular the Cracow insurrection in 1846 against Austrian rule) — because the Polish aristocracy were incapable of fighting the rule of the three alien Emperors. National emancipation for Poland meant not only shaking off the yoke of Russia (Marx wrote to a Russian Socialist group at Geneva in March 1870):

"The violent seizure of Poland by Russia forms the pernicious support and the actual cause of a military regime in Germany, and consequently on the whole continent. Therefore in bending their efforts towards smashing the chains of Poland, the Russian Socialists impose upon themselves the noble task of destroying the military régime, a task that is essential as a preliminary condition for the general emancipation of the European proletariat".

Again, in his *Civil War in France* (1871), which drew the main lessons of the Paris Commune for the Socialist movement everywhere, Marx underlined that this "essentially working class government", had it survived, would have "brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their district, and there secured to them, in the working men, the natural trustees of their interests. . . The Commune was

perfectly right in telling the peasants that 'its victory was their only hope' . . . The Commune would have delivered the peasant from the blood tax" (the cost of the recent war with Prussia) " . . . would have given him a cheap government, transformed his present bloodsuckers, the notary, advocate, executor and other judicial vampires, into salaried communal agents, elected by and responsible to himself".

Right up to the end of his life, Engels was stressing that the workers' party in order to conquer political power "must become a power in the countryside". And just as Marx had done many years before, Engels said that this was not only a question of votes. In Germany, he wrote:

"When we are in possession of State power we shall not even think of forcibly expropriating the small peasants (regardless of whether with or without compensation) as we shall have to do in the case of the bigger landlords. Our task relative to the small peasant consists, in the first place, in effecting transition of his private enterprise and private possession to cooperative ones, not forcibly but by dint of example and proffering social assistance for this purpose. . . We shall do everything at all permissible to make his lot more bearable, to facilitate his going over to the cooperatives should he decide to do so, and even to make it possible to remain on his small holding for a protracted length of time to think it over". (The Peasant Question in France and Germany, 1894)

Thus in supporting today the struggle of former colonial and semi-colonial people, consisting in their vast majority of peasants, against imperialist plunder and exploitation — peoples like those of Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and other newly-independent African States, in the Near East, South-East Asia or Latin America: or the peoples still under the imperialist yoke like those of South Africa — Communists are acting in accord with Marx's own teachings.

3. Capitalist Imperialism. Unlike previous imperialist systems known to history, the present day variety is constituted by the economic domination of capitalist monopolies, the merging of bank capital and industrial capital, the export of capital (to colonies or semi-colonies in particular), the formation of international capitalist monopolies and the accompanying division of the world among the biggest capitalist powers. The system was only in its germ when Marx died in 1883, and was still at its first stage, apart from the British Empire, when Engels died in 1895. Nevertheless, it would be a gross error to imagine that its emerging distinctive features had not been noticed by Marx and Engels — and therefore that its development had made their views "out of date".

The *Communist Manifesto* itself had provided the essential setting: "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production. . . . The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations, into civilisation".

But the *Manifesto* also described the periodical and destructive crises overtaking capitalist production. In volume III of *Capital* (1867) Marx developed fully his explanation of those crises — that "the capitalist process of production consists essentially of the production of surplus value, materialised in the surplus-product — that portion of the commodities produced in which unpaid labour is materialised". It is only for the pocketing of this surplus value that the capitalists are in business — and improved methods of production only stimulate "the greed for expansion of capital and production of surplus-value on an enlarged scale" (chapter 15). But such increased pocketing of surplus-value means that there is a constantly widening gap between the value of capital produced and the consuming capacity of the great mass of producers. Crises arise precisely because of this contradiction i.e. because the capitalist, while pocketing the extra commodities produced, finds the market is too small for him to be able to sell them and thus pocket the surplus-value they would otherwise represent.

Then the rate of profit secured by the capitalists begins to fall, and they turn elsewhere. If the capitalist was British, he had already been doing so for a century when Marx died. By the time Engels died, the capitalists of other countries, where large-scale industry and banking were developing, were beginning to do so too. Why? "Capital invested in colonies etc." (Marx explained that "etc." meant "countries with lesser facilities of production") "may yield a higher rate of profit for a simple reason, on account of the backward development, and for the added reason that slaves, coolies, permit a better exploitation of labour" (chapter 14).

Of course, as already demonstrated in Ireland and India by then, the process involved a heavy price for the existing producers in the colonies. The *Communist Manifesto* itself had already pointed out: "All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries. . . . that no longer work up

indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones". When Marx died, the great "grab for Africa" by Britain and her rivals had not yet developed: but within twenty years the picture over that whole vast continent answered precisely to what he had drawn. Foreign mines, foreign plantations, foreign-owned railways and docks were the industrial weapons used to destroy native handicraft industries, and to tear from African soil its inexhaustible mineral and vegetable treasures.

Moreover, Marx had already in the first volume of *Capital* (chapter 32) drawn attention to another "historical tendency" in capitalist production, namely, centralisation of capital — "the expropriation of many capitalists by few" — as the production process, including its crises which forced smaller firms into bankruptcy, continued. There was "a constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurped and monopolised all advantages of this process of transformation".

The Gap Widens

After another decade, in April 1879 (writing to the Russian economist Danielson) Marx laid special emphasis on a new aspect — the *financial* as well as the directly *economic* role of the great expansion of railways which was taking place, and which involved far greater resources than any one capitalist could provide. It was giving

"an impetus never before suspected to the concentration of capital, and also to the accelerated and immensely enlarged cosmopolitan activity of loanable capital, thus embracing the whole world in a network of financial swindling and mutual indebtedness, the capitalist form of 'international' brotherhood. . . The railways gave of course an immense impulse to the development of foreign commerce, but the commerce in countries which export principally raw produce increased the misery of the masses".

Two years earlier Engels — who worked in the closest possible cooperation with Marx on this — had also taken up, in his *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, the question of the emerging joint-stock companies, controlling great masses of the means of production, "so colossal that, like the railways, they exclude all other forms of capitalist exploitation". At a further stage, these companies become insufficient.

"The producers on a large scale in a particular branch of industry, in a particular country, unite in a 'Trust', a union for the purpose of regulating production. . . But trusts of this kind, as soon as business becomes bad, are generally liable to break up, and on this account compel a yet greater concentration of association".

Moreover ultimately the State itself would have to undertake the development of production. This could not do away with the capitalist nature of the productive forces, Engels emphasised: because "the modern State, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the State of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital".

A series of wars for colonial markets conducted by such capitalist states — more specifically in the shape of aggression against weaker capitalist states by those already closely identifiable with the great trusts in their country (Japan against China in 1894-5, German invasion of China 1897, United States against Spain in 1898, Great Britain against the South African Republic in 1899) was just beginning when Engels died. But he had already, in another letter to Danielson, drawn attention to the "insoluble situation" which the development of capitalist production was creating *internationally*, because of the existence of countries without a foreign market (like Russia) and countries "more or less capable of competing on the open world market" (like England). These, Engels said in wonderfully pregnant words, of course basing himself on British experience so far, were able to launch upon "the forcible opening of new markets" (September 1892).

He enlarged on this theme in the very last weeks of his life, when writing a supplementary note to volume III of *Capital* (June 1895). Since Marx had prepared the notes for that volume in 1865, practically all industries, banks and credit institutions in the more advanced countries had now passed under the control of joint-stock companies. As a result, he remarked, the colonisation process was now "simply in the service of the Stock Exchange, in the interests of which the European Powers a few years ago divided up Africa: the French seized Tunisia and Tonking, Africa has been simply leased to companies (Nigeria, Southern Africa, German South-West and East Africa). Mashonaland and Natal have been seized for the Stock Exchange by Rhodes".

Imperialism Conquers the World

Thus, observing the changes in international capitalism right up to their last years, Marx and Engels had established that (i) in their search for higher profits, the capitalists had turned to the colonies; (ii) the capitalists themselves were being forced into larger and larger monopolist trusts; (iii) there were other countries besides Britain now industrially advancing, able to build railways and accumulating immense "loanable capital" as a result; (iv) the Stock Exchange was now a means of sending this capital for

investment into the colonies, taking their raw material and cheap labour for the benefit of the ruling country; (v) in order to back up this trend, the governments of the Great Powers were taking over undeveloped territories by force; (vi) the outstanding example of this was the grab for Africa.

In this way, Marx and Engels were almost in so many words passing on the torch to Lenin for his epoch-making work on *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, twenty years after Engels' death, in the midst of the first world war — and for the Communist International's decisions in 1920, mentioned earlier.

4. Socialist Planning v. Capitalist Mess. Particularly striking, in this period of protracted crisis in the capitalist world — in which the “victory over inflation” in all the leading capitalist countries is achieved through thousands of bankruptcies of smaller capitalist firms, many millions of workers thrown out of work, and schools, hospitals, cultural and social services of all kinds either closed down or starved of equipment and funds — is the contrast with the results of socialist planning in the countries where the capitalist class has been driven out. And this was likewise confidently foreseen by Marx and Engels, not from any Utopian vision of what socialist society would be like, but from their study of the problems and class struggles of capitalist society.

In the *Communist Manifesto* they had declared the aim of Communists to be “extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State” (including property in land) “the bringing into cultivation of waste land, and the improvement of the soil generally, *in accordance with a common plan*”.

In *Capital*, Marx carried the question further.

“Just as the savage must wrestle with nature in order to satisfy his wants, in order to maintain his life and reproduce it, so civilised man has to do it, and he must do it in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. . . Freedom in this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that socialised men, the associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power; that they accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it”. (volume III, chapter 48).

Elsewhere in the same work Marx showed how the system must operate — always providing that the capitalist class had been displaced, and consequently that the surplus product which the worker turned out (over

and above his means of subsistence, in their fullest sense) remains in the hands of society ("the associated producers") and is not pocketed by any capitalist. Picture, says Marx:

"a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community. . . The total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production, and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence. A distribution among them is consequently necessary." (Volume 1, Chapter 1).

How would a socialist society treat that part of the product of its members which was destined to be a means of individual consumption? Marx dealt with this as well in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (of the German Social-Democrats) which he wrote in 1875. He underlined that he was writing not of a fully Communist society, but of society just as it has emerged from capitalism — "thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges". From the total means of consumption there must be deducted: "First, the general costs of administration not belonging to production. This part will, from the outset, be very considerably restricted in comparison with present-day society, and it diminishes as the new society develops. Secondly, that which is intended for the common satisfaction of needs such as schools, health services, etc. From the outset, this part grows considerably in comparison with present-day society, and it grows in proportion as the new society develops. Thirdly, funds for those unable to work etc., in short, for what is included under so-called official poor relief today". Only after that must come what each individual member of society gets by his or her labour.

The System Works

Anyone who takes the trouble to study the actual working of the economy in the USSR — and, making allowances for the different starting points and opportunities in each socialist country, there too — will see that it is on the lines indicated by Marx that the system works (in spite of all the howls, jeers and lies of its enemies, playing in the long run on ignorance of the facts which they do their best to maintain).

And the same applies if you make an honest study of the machinery which ensures that the system is operated by what Marx called "a

community of free individuals": in the first place, of the power of the trade unions, in the factories and fields and at the top of the social control also exercised by other means, particularly the local and regional elected authorities (Soviets), the special system of elected "people's controllers" which operates parallel with the Soviets, and the newspapers.

It is also relevant to recall what Engels wrote in 1894 (in an article about social relations in Russia) concerning the meaning of successful Socialist planning in an advanced country for those countries which have started capitalist development but still retain clan or tribal conditions, or vestiges thereof. They would certainly use the vestiges of common property surviving from primitive society in order considerably to reduce the length of time required for their development towards socialism.

"But the unavoidable condition for this will be the example and active support of the West — which so far remains capitalist. Only when capitalist economy has been superseded in its country of origin, and in the countries where it has fully blossomed, only when the backward countries see from this example 'how it is done', how to oblige the productive forces of modern industry, transformed into social property, to serve society as a whole — only then will these backward countries be able to enter upon such a shorter road of development. But in return their success will be assured."

5. Expanded labour organisation. The trade union movement itself, which has made such striking progress in the capitalist world as well, has also in fact developed "according to Marx", since he died a hundred years ago. In the *Communist Manifesto* he and Engels had marked the formation of "combinations against the bourgeois" (trade unions) as a first step in the workers' advance towards organisation as a class. In the *Inaugural Address* which Marx wrote in 1864 for the International Working Men's Association (to which many of the most influential British trade unions then existing immediately affiliated) he pointed to the "element of success" which the workers already possessed, namely, "numbers: but numbers weigh only in the balance if united by combination and led by knowledge".

Next year, at two meetings of the General Council of the IWMA, he delivered the address which became known for many years as *Value, Price and Profit*, in which he stated:

"Trade unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerrilla

war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class".

In 1892, writing a preface to the Second German edition of the same work, Engels noted as a welcome fact that workers' candidates had been put up for the first time in the British general election against Conservative and Liberals in London, Glasgow and elsewhere, and that two had been elected in London and one at Middleborough. The working class movement which they represented was still engaged in "casting off traditional prejudices of every sort — bourgeois, old trade unionist and even doctrinaire Socialist" in order "to get together on a basis common to all of them". Nevertheless, the unheard-of result had brought "boundless joy among the working people: for the first time they have seen and felt what they can achieve by using their suffrage in the interests of their class".

Even earlier than this, however, Engels had shown that he was looking further than immediate election successes. He wrote to his friend Becker in Switzerland in June 1885:

"There will be workers in Parliament in increasing numbers, and each one worse than the last. But that is necessary in England. All the scoundrels who played the part of respectable bourgeois Radicals here at the time of the International must show themselves in Parliament for what they are. Then the masses will turn Socialist here too. Industrial over-production will do the rest".

He repeated this idea in a letter to Bebel in October that year:

"What is most necessary of all here is that masses of the official Labour leaders should get into Parliament. Then things will soon go finally: they will expose themselves quickly enough".

As we know, the Labour Party was formed in Britain by trade unions with under half a million members and some Socialist groups "on a basis common to all of them", a few years later. The first considerable body of Labour MPs were elected in 1906. But it was not until 1924 that the Labour Party was able to form a government, but as a minority with Liberal support; and not until 1945 did it have such a large majority in Parliament that it was able to form a government on its own.

Does the self-exposure of Labour and Social-Democratic leaders which we have in fact witnessed in Britain mean that Marx and Engels and Lenin were wrong in putting their finger on what the working class and the party it formed could do, and would be obliged to do — that is, on its historic function? Did it mean that they were wrong in anticipating that, once the

workers reached a definite level of political consciousness thanks to their trade union experience, they would organise (in one way or another) to send their own representatives into Parliament, and that this would be the first step (not only in Britain) to their ridding themselves of "traditional prejudices of every sort"? Of course not. What marked their genius was their ability to see where existing trends in the working class (as in other fields) were inevitably leading *in the future*. They were right about the future but wrong about dates. That is the privilege of genius, as distinct from the prophets of religious mythology.

In fact, the legacy of Marx remains the greatest asset the workers and their allies have in any country, a hundred years later. Marxism has developed further and grown immensely stronger, a new spectre haunting the capitalist world, for the very reason that Lenin summed up in his book of 1908 *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*: "The Marxist doctrine is all-powerful because it is true".

from the Marxist classics...

"The materialistic conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged."

**Selected Works of Marx and Engels, page
417, International Publishers, New York,
1968.**

A TRADE UNION IS NOT A POLITICAL PARTY

A Critique of the Speech: 'Where FOSATU Stands'

by Toussaint

"The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation etc."

Lenin: What is to be done.

Every serious trade union organisation, sooner or later, has to face the challenge of passing beyond the limits of pure trade union affairs — that is, the regulation of relations between workers and employers — and moving on to political action. Every serious trade union, sooner or later, finds that its union claims are being resisted not by the employers alone, but by the combination of bosses and state; the state intervenes in the struggle to contain the union by means of law or direct police intervention and suppression, and by the oppression, bribery or corruption of the union leadership. If the union is to achieve its aims — or in some situations if the union is even to survive — it inevitably has to turn its attention to political action to protect or advance the interests of its members and the gains previously won by union action.

Nowhere is the impulse towards political action by trade unions more compelling than in a repressive police state like South Africa, where even 'pure' trade unionism hangs constantly on the edge of illegality. Police

intervention in every union or even local factory dispute is routine, and so is the use of brutality and terrorism against union leaders and militants. The systematic racial oppression of the political system overflows into systematic political persecution of the black workers' trade unions.

South Africa's black workers have always therefore gravitated easily towards politically involved trade unionism. The Western European concept of some sort of idealised 'non-political' trade unionism has never gained much credence or support. There have, certainly, been many trade union attempts to maintain a precarious legality within the police state by denying any political aspirations or connection. But such attempts are invariably short-lived. At the first real clash of economic interests between workers and boss, there is direct police-state intervention; and the union must either retire from the struggle and lose credibility amongst its members, or broaden the struggle to take on the bosses' state. Political struggle is thus at the centre of all serious black unionism in South Africa.

It is this broader aspect of political action by trade unions which forms the main thrust of the keynote speech to the April 1982 FOSATU conference, made by its general secretary Joe Foster. FOSATU (the Federation of South African Trade Unions) was then only three years old. It had achieved some considerable success both in terms of members organised, unions affiliated and shop and industrial struggles successfully waged. But already the limitations of purely union organisation and activity had forced themselves to the forefront:

"Has our organisational activity developed workers' leadership that can give guidance and direction to all workers? (My emphasis T.). . . If we were to think in terms of our members only we would have a very limited political role. If however we are thinking more widely of the working class, then we have to examine very much more carefully what our political role is."

There is nothing in the speech to indicate why a trade union federation should be concerned to give leadership to *all* workers, or think beyond the confining limits of its own members to the wider working class beyond; or even why a political role should assume such importance in its thinking. One might assume that this derives from some of FOSATU's experience. Perhaps so. But certainly in Foster's own speech it appears as a statement of belief and faith, rather than a distillation from experience. The point might appear to be a quibble. But in this case, I think not. Foster's whole speech, as I shall attempt to point out, is a statement of faith, of belief rather than of concrete lessons drawn from concrete experience. Though it

addresses itself to vitally important issues, it seems to me to be flawed by a fatal weakness; it disregards the real experiences of the working class and pins its argument instead on an unquestioning faith, founded, it would seem, in some unstated 'theory' — or perhaps dogma.

Central Issue

Yet without doubt this matter of the relationship between trade union and political activity is one of the central issues for the South African working class; and so too is the even more complex matter of the relationship between working class politics and the broad, inter-class popular political struggle led by the South African liberation movement. Political theorists and thinkers of differing views have put forward trenchant and profoundly argued theses on such topics, not just in the recent period but for over sixty years of growth in South African working class numbers and political experience. Deep splits and schisms in the working class ranks have formed on such issues; organisations have been built to prosper or founder on one or other view translated into actual political practice. No serious discussion of the matter then can leave all this historical experience out of consideration, ignore it altogether, and reopen the debate anew as though it is now being aired from the beginning and for the first time.

Yet Foster does just that. His analysis is one which places before FOSATU a clean slate, on which they may write anything at all without any suspicion of what has been written by others, and without any need to consider it. His only reference to any past experience of working class political movements whatsoever are to some from the advanced industrial countries of Europe; there the workers' movements he sees as many sided combinations of trade unions, political parties, co-operatives and publishing houses — "powerful social forces in these societies", but where the guiding reins of society nevertheless remain in the hands of hostile elements like Reagan and Thatcher. As for the experience of the socialist countries, great achievements of real benefit to the workers have been recorded, he states, but "there is still need for workers to control their own destiny", as evidenced by Solidarnosc in Poland. But from South African history apparently nothing.

"Worker activities such as strikes and protests do not in themselves mean that a working class movement or working class politics exist. . . In South Africa we cannot talk of a working class movement as we have defined it above (from Western Europe T). Whilst there is undoubtedly a large and growing working class, its power is only a potential power since as yet it has no definite social identity of itself as a class."

Clearly then the questions that have to be asked are many. If there is no workers' movement yet, after over sixty years of trade unionism of one sort or another, why not? What tangible change in the conditions of life would such a movement offer the working class other than "a social identity of itself?" How can such a movement now be built when it has never previously been done? And what will its relationship be to the broad national liberation and political movements within the country which already exist and already represent some — if not all — of the interests of workers?

It is not part of my critique of Foster's speech to complain that he does not provide definitive answers to these questions; they are difficult enough to give any analyst of the South African scene a great deal to ponder over and deter answers. My critique rests rather on the fact that these questions are not asked at all. They are simply brushed aside. Foster says:

"It is not possible in a paper such as this to deal fully with all the developments in South Africa's history that have led to the non-existence of a workers' movement".

True enough. But the historical fact is that at least one organisation — the Communist Party — has existed for over sixty years; it claims to be a political expression of the working class; it has — or had at one time or another — those other attributes of a "movement" — co-operatives, publishing organisations and closely linked trade union connections.

But Foster ignores these facts entirely, without even a passing reference or consideration.

He is less cavalier in his treatment of the most significant and flourishing political movement in the country — the African National Congress, which carries the present political aspirations of the majority of the black working class as well as other classes of oppressed South Africans. His explanation for this phenomenon is in sharp contrast with his "clean slate" view of the working class movement. His theme runs thus: South Africa's history has been one of "great repression, and the major ideological instrument for this oppression has been racism..." Consequently, the main task of the people has been to attack the repressive regime; and accordingly there has grown up a tradition of "popular or populist" politics, of which the ANC is the foremost example; it "... rose to be one of the great liberation movements in Africa." There were admittedly also unions, and

"occasions when workers resisted by strike action, protest and organisation. Yet this by itself cannot constitute a working class

movement. While the unions were often prominent they were always small and weakly organised. . . They could not provide an organisational base for a working class movement as we have defined it above. . . The effective political role of progressive unions and of worker activity was to provide a crucial part of any popular struggle and that was to give it its 'Worker's Voice.' The progressive trade unions became part of the popular struggle against oppression. They did not and probably could not have provided the base for working class organisation."

But yet the activities of these same unions have been "...very important in creating the conditions that led to the emergence, in the last ten to fifteen years, of the present progressive trade unions."

History is More Complex

On the face of it, there is some factual basis for this analysis. But history teaches something different, more complex and — for the thesis on workers' political movements — more important than this. The whole of South African trade union history shows that, in real life, the problem was not that trade unions failed to provide the base from which political organisation and activity could develop; but rather that political movements — in particular Communism — provided the basis for trade union organisation.

The history of South African trade unionism is only partly a history of spontaneous banding together of workers in one or several work-places; mainly, it is a history of organisational drives deliberately undertaken by dedicated political activists, acting in response to policy decisions by political movements, especially from the Communist Party. Certainly many of their union structures were weak and poorly organised. But nonetheless, these were the pioneers who laid the base for future organisations, and often too for popular mass political struggles. It is impossible to comprehend the upsurge of militant popular national struggles without taking account of the formative and trail-blazing actions; for example, the black miners in their 1946 strike, organised and led by union and Communists together, sowed a new wave of mass militancy which included the final boycotting of Smuts' 'toy telephone', the Native Representative Council. Or for example the pass burning campaigns organised by Congress, Communists and the ICU in an earlier age; or the great popular strikes of the 1960's and the first such — the May Day strike called jointly by the Council of Non-European Trade Unions and the Communist Party.

History needs to be studied as it happened; not in the abstract. And if it is, it reveals a picture vastly different from Foster's exposition of it. It would show, for instance, that it is false to claim that the mere numerical growth of the working class in the 1950's gave the 'popular' movement need to "include the workers... and as a result SACTU became an important element in the Congress Alliance." On the contrary, the growing militancy and political awareness of the working class forced other classes in the so-called 'populist' — properly the 'national liberation' — movement to recognise it as a leading force and to adopt ever more socialist-inclined policies as a consequence of it.

But why dispute these points? Foster's main point is one that cannot be disputed; that the workers need to find a basis for broadening out from simple trade unionism, to political organisation. Agreed. Yet I believe that it is necessary to dispute false arguments even when argued in a good cause; failure to do so will lead in the end to wrong policies and wrong decisions on how to proceed. Omission of all consideration of the experience of earlier times, and the omission of all reference to the rich experience of the Communist Party does in fact lead Foster, in my view, to many false conclusions — most important the conclusion that FOSATU itself provides the only starting point and base from which to build a new workers' movement.

In fact, the South African working class has passed well beyond the starting point. It has formed political parties and widely based community organisations of many different types, ranging from residents' associations to peasants' leagues, from youth and students' bodies to national liberation movements. It has formulated detailed programmes, operated constitutions, debated tactics, established codes of membership behaviour, and so on. Nothing that is now proposed by Foster has not in fact been done before. It may, of course, be argued that the results of all those past activities are disappointing, or that the lines followed in both policy and organisation were misconceived. But if so, that must be said; the reasons for it must be analysed and absorbed, or the same results will flow again from any new attempt. The claim that FOSATU can now, without reference to the rich experience of the past, produce the definitive working class movement which will have none of the disabilities of those earlier attempts remains — however one dresses it up in rhetoric — not a sound political guide but an article of faith.

The accumulated experience of the working class — both of our own country and many others — has been distilled into a body of political

knowledge and understanding we call Marxism-Leninism. The growth of the South African working class in numbers and in militancy has been marked by a growth also in political consciousness, and thus a growth in the seriousness with which working class politicians treat Marxism-Leninism. It is, of course, understandable that those speaking in public, in the midst of South African police hostility to anything that smacks of Marxism, will use caution in choosing their words. But the contributions of Marxist thinkers and writers to a uniquely working class view of South Africa and its problems cannot be dismissed because of a legal need for caution.

Theoretical Basis

On what theory then is Foster's faith based? There are three main strands to his theoretical exposition.

Strand one: In South Africa capitalist production massively dominates all other forms of production. There are no great agricultural landlords, "and no significant peasantry or collective agriculture". Almost all the working population depend upon wage labour in industry or agriculture. There is no significant petty bourgeoisie or landed class with a solid economic base. Hence, "In the economy capital and labour are the major forces", and face each other across the battle frontiers.

Second strand: The ANC — the major force now challenging the South African state — arose as a populist movement against oppression when capital was still not fully developed, and could thus hide itself behind the front of race oppression. Its popular appeal at home and its wide acceptance abroad limit its effectiveness; it has to advance its popularity by claiming credit for all forms of internal resistance, with a tendency to "...encourage undirected opportunistic activity." It has to retain links with both West and East by apparent neutrality in the Great Power struggle, and "...certainly could not appear to offer a serious socialist alternative..." This "must seriously affect its relationship to workers."

Third strand: "Most unions and their leadership lack confidence" to act as a real workers' leadership. "They see their role as part of a wider struggle, but are unclear on what is required for the worker struggle... Energy is spent establishing unity across a wide front. Such a position is clearly a great strategic error." Popular mass movements aiming at the overthrow of the regime cannot deal with the particular problems of workers. "It is therefore essential that workers must strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation even whilst they are part of the

wider political struggle...and ensure that the popular movement is not hijacked by elements who will in the end have no option but to turn against their worker supporters."

What sort of a theoretical basis does all this provide for the working class — which is after all the whole point and purpose of Foster's address? At its best it can only be found simplistic and imprecise. In it, it is true, there are echoes of Marxist and national liberationist theory, but strangely watered down, perhaps even weakened or distorted beyond recognition. Consider, for example the simplistic way in which the presence in South Africa of some million rural subsistence or below-subsistence farmers are dismissed in the casual phrase — "no significant peasantry"; and contrast it with the much deeper and richer analysis of the rural population and their place in the political development of South Africa made in either the Freedom Charter or the Communist Party's programme. Foster's simplistic approach is not criticised here because it is inadequate, but because it is wrong; and being wrong it provides a wrong basis for the political programme which flows from it. That is a programme of simple confrontation between workers and "capital" from which the remaining sectors of South African society, probably numerically the majority of the population, are excluded. They are left like superfluous actors, unheard and unseen in the wings of a great drama, which is to be completed without any call ever being made upon them.

Or consider again the explanation of ANC "populism", which it is said makes it incapable of offering a serious socialist alternative: namely, that the search for support amongst all classes at home and both power blocs abroad produces opportunism. That there are such pressures within the mass movement cannot be denied; but such a simple explanation is not just a partial truth; it is a profound distortion. It ignores the reality of a strong and constantly growing working class influence in the ANC, which has given rise to socialist-inclined policies as witnessed by the Freedom Charter's provisions on land and monopoly industries, and even more strongly by the 1969 policy *Strategy and Tactics*. It underplays, almost to the point of extinction, the continuing existence of national oppression, which provides a fertile soil for continuing — perhaps even growing — national consciousness and national unity. On this thoroughly misleading presentation, the contribution of the national struggle to the class struggle is ignored, and a new prop added to the simple we-against-them, worker-against-capital concept in Foster's thesis.

What is new in Foster's thesis, then, is not its general starting point — that the special needs of the working class can best be met by an independent organisation of that class — for that has been the common credo of the politically conscious workers since the first working-class political body emerged in this country near the beginning of the century. What is new — or perhaps not so much new as deviant — is that Foster presents this conclusion not from the background of real South Africa, but from an imaginary one which reveals no trace of any existing workers' political movement, no trace of any significant class forces other than wage labourers and capitalists, and no appreciation that the great national liberation movement is more than an irrelevancy. It is a thesis much favoured by some left socialist theorists in Western Europe, themselves totally foreign to the reality of South African conditions, however deeply steeped they may be in Marxist-sounding dogmas. It has not been taken up with any fervour in South Africa until now, for in the highly politically charged atmosphere of South Africa, bitter experiences of setbacks and defeats by the regime have dealt harshly with dogmas taken over unthinkingly from the armchairs of Europe.

What Sort of Workers' Movement?

I cannot end this critique without paying some attention to Foster's concept of the organisation that workers need to exercise their independent political role. There can be little doubt that Foster is right in his contention that "...workers must strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation." But there is a chasm between this simple truth and his next conclusion; which is that the South African workers must therefore now seek to build their own, *new* organisation. This is a leap without any run-up or take-off; no serious thinker about South Africa's future can accept it without question. The questions crowd in. What sort of movement? With what programme and purpose? Why separate from all other existing workers' movements? How related to the main movement of today, the national movement led by the ANC? And so on and so forth. And the peculiarly South African question: is a movement fostered by a black trade union movement to be a *black* workers' movement, or just a workers' movement?

To most of this there is little answer. The main vital questions remain unasked by him, and thus unanswered. In place of these central questions of why, and what for, he proceeds directly to the question that can only

follow behind: how? Or what he describes as "concrete tasks and challenges."

"What is crucial in organisation is the quality of that organisation — the quality that gives it its overall direction and capability. . . . Three factors. . . . affect the quality of worker organisation — the structure of organisational strength and decision making; the location of organisational strength, and the political qualities of its leadership structure."

Maybe. On the 'structure of organisational strength', he says that FOSATU has been built on the factory floor, its shop stewards participating in a democratic process of decision making and struggle. "FOSATU's role is to link industrial unions into a tight federation"; its task in the years ahead must be "...to consolidate and develop factory organisation." It must seek to locate its organisational strength strategically "in the major industries. . . . to be a national presence. . . . which should be able to dominate industrial areas. By doing this we create the major means whereby worker organisation can play a significant if not dominant role in the communities that surround these industrial areas."

As for quality of leadership: "We are not talking about leadership in the sense that it is usually discussed — which is in terms of individuals and great men. . . . What we are interested in is the elected representatives of workers and the officials they appoint. . . ." And so on, though the precise sense is not very clear. We are told, for instance, that "...workers' leadership is related to your job and therefore your wage and therefore your ability to survive. . . . The most appropriate comparison is with the guerilla fighter". Etc, etc. The precise meaning as I say is obscure.

But the thinking behind it emerges quite clearly. It is all of a piece with what has gone before. It is the belief that the trade union organisations and trade union struggles can suffice for all the needs of the working class; that in the unions and through union struggles the working class will achieve unity, it will learn politics, it will acquire the skills needed to take over the guiding reins of society, manage the whole of industry and society, and reconstruct it on a new socialist base. It is a belief that socialist consciousness can develop spontaneously from the union experience, and that the affairs of society and state can be best managed from the 'grass roots' democracy of the shop floor.

Political theorists would probably describe this type of ideology as "syndicalism." The label itself is of no importance. What is important is to establish whether it is well founded and therefore valid for the South

African working class and for FOSATU. But we are back looking at Foster's clean slate. There is no evidence, no reference to the experience of others, no historical precedents. Only the speaker's belief. Faith.

But history is not a clean slate. There is a vast accumulation of experience by the working class of our own country and others over the decades since capitalism first emerged full blown on the social scene. South African workers dare not ignore it, in order instead to follow some passionate article of faith, held as tenaciously — without proof or verification — as any religious dogma. Our accumulated experience tells us that the trade unions alone, the workers' struggle alone will not of itself, pass beyond the limits of economic struggle against the employers. To pass beyond that limit, there is need for a clear socialist theory, which understands the nature and the course of development of capitalist society, and which can thus point the way in which socialism can be reached, and the steps that *have* to be taken to get there.

Socialist theory and ideology we have in plenty, bequeathed to us by great thinkers of the past like Marx, Engels and Lenin and many others, added to daily by profound thinkers in many countries including our own who have constantly enriched our fund of knowledge out of new experiences of our own times. All this cannot be discovered instinctively, grasped from the air by even the most militant worker. It has to be learnt through study; and it has to be applied deliberately by conscious decision-making — not hoped for as a miraculous consequence of spontaneous action of revolt or resistance.

It is for this reason that Marxists have always understood that there are limitations to the trade union role in changing society — limits beyond which it cannot advance without the aid and co-operation of a detachment armed with an advanced theory and with a dedication and discipline which will enable it to impart consciousness to the class — a detachment called a political party.

Foster seems to sidestep this issue by somewhat unclear references to a "workers' movement" and "worker leadership". But it cannot be sidestepped without seriously misleading the workers, and FOSATU itself. To claim in the face of historical facts that "...there has not been and is not a working class movement in South Africa" is false. There has been and is. There has been and is a political party of the working class. To attempt to form a new movement without first setting the record straight must lead to confusion, perhaps disaster. The Communist Party, it is true, keeps a low profile in the public eye in South Africa, as it must. It is an

organisation working underground and hunted, not in the open where publicity could be gained. But the existence and achievements of the Communist Party are well known to everybody. Its members today are in the front line of struggle. Dare FOSATU ignore this? And dare it ignore either the confusion and division it will sow in the ranks of the working class if it sets up a new "workers' movement" in competition with or alongside the still living Communist Party?

And dare it ignore the disruptive and divisive effect its "workers' movement" may have on the premier force in the country, the African National Congress, if the relations between its "workers' movement" and its "worker leadership" on the one hand and the national liberation movement on the other is not defined and clarified?

Perhaps Foster's address is only a first step in the clarification of his own and FOSATU's ideas. If I have been harsh in my critique of those ideas, it is because they deal with a serious and important matter — perhaps the most important theoretical and practical matter before the South African workers today. And just because of the serious nature of the matter, Foster, FOSATU and everyone else in the working class ranks must expect to be judged by the seriousness with which they tackle it.

[illegible]

No workers' movement or revolution is worth the bones of a single champion which ignores or excludes the vast mass of the workers of this country, the most flagrantly oppressed victims of the most glaring form of capitalist exploitation, the exploitation of the black races and their labour by white capital . . . And if the upper white artisans are not with these masses, they are against them, they are consciously or unconsciously kicking against the pricks of the proletarian movement they profess to espouse.

The International, April 4, 1919

[illegible]

NAMIBIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND THE FREEDOM OF AFRICA

by William Pomeroy

Manoeuvres and negotiations over the independence of Namibia have now been going on for longer than in the case of any other African country. It has been nearly 17 years since the United Nations General Assembly, in October 1966, revoked the post-World War I mandate of South Africa over the territory formerly known as South West Africa and began a U.N.-sponsored process to attain independence for its people. In that same year the Namibian party of liberation, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), deciding that peaceful processes alone could not win national freedom, launched its prolonged guerrilla armed struggle to throw off South African rule.

That those processes and struggles have become increasingly drawn out and increasingly complicated has been due to a great extent to changing circumstances outside Namibia: the transformation of the setting in southern Africa in which Namibia's independence struggle is occurring, and altered international relationships which have made the leading imperialist powers more desperate to retain areas that they or their allies still control.

In southern Africa the entire arc of countries that South Africa once regarded as its colonial bulwark against the winds of liberation on the continent — Angola, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Mozambique — have freed themselves from colonial oppression since 1966. Instead of having a bulwark in the control of its allies, the apartheid state stands exposed to neighbours who are committed to an anti-apartheid position. More important, in South Africa itself the anti-apartheid liberation forces have in the same course of time risen from a temporarily suppressed condition to be able to confront the racist regime with all forms of struggle in ever more powerful ways.

For South Africa, SWAPO's struggle in Namibia has grown from an isolated uprising to a front in apartheid's war of survival against opponents who encircle it from outside and who strike at it from inside. It is a front, furthermore, which if lost can give immeasurably greater moral if not material strength to all the anti-apartheid forces. This is the changing setting in southern Africa that has caused South Africa to resist independence for Namibia with endless delaying tactics and to intensify its war against SWAPO.

The apartheid regime, in fact, has put itself on a war footing in regard to all its relations at home and on its border, and is waging military and economic warfare against its neighbours, to destabilise and to subordinate them. In pursuit of this strategy, the war against SWAPO in Namibia has become a convenient excuse for invading and wreaking destruction upon Angola. The blocking of Namibian independence has become increasingly important as an essential part of the overall South African strategy of defending and perpetuating apartheid.

This is one reason why the issue of Namibia's independence has become drawn out. The other main reason, the attitude and manoeuvring of the leading imperialist powers, is also linked with the anti-colonial process in southern African but has broader connotations. For imperialism, the independence of Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique under left-wing leaders has meant either the immediate or the prospective loss of control over very rich mineral resources. Namibia and South Africa itself are the last areas of Africa where U.S., British, French and West German multinational companies have highly profitable freedom to operate. These powers have therefore collaborated with South Africa in every possible way to block Namibia's independence and to destabilise the independence of the newly-free African countries in the region.

The problems of imperialism in southern Africa are but one part of the situation facing imperialism internationally. Since 1966 the resources of great areas that were once fully in imperialist control have slipped either wholly or in part from their hands, in the Middle East, South East Asia, Latin America. A trend of social emancipation in countries where neo-colonialism had functioned — Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and others — has augmented the growing problem. The development of a prolonged economic crisis in the capitalist part of the world has aggravated the conditions of neo-colonial areas and has magnified the threat of social emancipation for many more countries.

Resort to War

In these circumstances, U.S. imperialism in particular has, like South Africa in its region, adopted a war footing attitude in its international policies. Every revolutionary upsurge, or trend of social emancipation, is viewed as a front in a global conflict (against "communism"). The Reagan administration in the U.S. has mounted a "rapid deployment force" to be rushed to any point where "U.S. interests" are threatened by people wanting to assume control of their own resources. Every case in which popular forces turn to socialist countries for assistance is termed "Soviet aggression" to be met by a U.S. counter-attack, through destabilisation devices, armed subversion, or more direct U.S. intervention.

Angola's request for Cuban troops to help it repel South African invasion and subversion has been pictured by U.S. imperialism as an instance of "Soviet aggression." As U.S. Vice-President George Bush said during his African tour in November 1982:

"My government is not ashamed to state the U.S. interest in seeing an end to the presence of Cuban forces in Angola. Their introduction seven years ago tore the fabric of reciprocal restraint between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the developing world."

As if the U.S. with its record in Vietnam, Central America, Cuba itself, the Middle East and elsewhere had ever shown such restraint, and as if there had ever been any "reciprocal agreement" of the kind Bush and his conflict-minded government claim.

It is with this global warfare outlook that U.S. imperialism and its Reagan administration have brought their influence to bear upon the situation in southern Africa, acting with South Africa to disrupt and derail the process of independence for Namibia and giving support to South African aggression against its neighbours.

Such are the circumstances, regionally and internationally, that have delayed and thwarted Namibia's achievement of independence.

Foreign Investment

All of the imperialist powers share the guilt of protecting and reinforcing apartheid, either through investments, trade and loans or through vetoing U.N. moves to impose sanctions on South Africa. However, in recent years it has been the United States that has taken the lead as an ally of apartheid, and in aiding South Africa to keep control of Namibia.

U.S. corporations have command of a large share of Namibia's economy, giving the U.S. a major direct interest in maintaining the status quo in that country. Of the two big mining companies that account for 90 per cent of Namibia's mining production (the dominant factor in the economy), one is the U.S.-controlled Tsumeb Corporation in which American Metal Climax Inc. (AMAX) and Newmont Mining each have a 29 percent share; the other is Consolidated Diamond Mines, which is owned by De Beers, a part of the Anglo-American Corporation in which U.S. capital is sizeable. However, Namibia's Diamond Area No. 2 is parcelled out to Diamond Mining and Utility Co. of South West Africa, which is owned by the Tidewater Oil Co., a U.S. firm. These are all long-standing U.S. interests in Namibia. In the early part of 1982, a news item appeared claiming that "the largest oil deposits in the world" had been discovered in Namibia and that a U.S. Super Oil Co. had begun offshore drilling. A blanket of silence has since followed on this report, but it could well have a bearing on subsequent U.S. moves on Namibia.

Most often it is the British Rio Tinto Zinc and its Rossing uranium mine that are publicised for operating in Namibia, but the U.S. mining interests are far larger than those of RTZ, and have a much bigger stake in delaying Namibian freedom. Above all they fear the prospect of a government headed by SWAPO, which has warned foreign companies of the confiscatory or compensation penalties of disregarding U.N. resolutions that call upon them to cease exploiting Namibia's resources under the illegal South African occupation.

As international pressure upon South Africa to relinquish Namibia became increasingly effective in the 1970s, producing U.N. Resolution 385 in January 1976 calling on South Africa to transfer power to the people of Namibia and to hold free elections under U.N. supervision, U.S. manoeuvres and intrigues on behalf of South Africa became very active. Resort to vetoes in the U.N. Security Council to block anti-apartheid

sanctions and boycotts or to hold up enforcement of Resolution 385 had become increasingly embarrassing for the U.S. and other imperialist powers, so the U.S. concocted a deceptive device through which endless delay could be achieved without so much exposure.

This device was the "Western Contact Group." In April 1977 the five western countries then in the Security Council (the U.S., Britain, West Germany, France and Canada) formed such a group, obtained Security Council approval for it (on consultation with SWAPO and African states, the Soviet Union abstained), and undertook to serve as a negotiating body with South Africa on the whole question of Namibia's independence and the steps towards it.

The history of the "Contact Group's" activities over the past six years has been a grossly deceitful one of pretending to negotiate independence for Namibia while colluding with South Africa to delay or to negate independence measures. While preparing a plan (in 1978) that on the face of it was acceptable to the U.N., for holding U.N.-supervised elections for a Namibian Constituent Assembly, the "Contact Group" did nothing to deter South Africa from going ahead with its own internal elections in Namibia to set up a puppet Assembly without the participation of SWAPO. Subsequently the "Contact Group" lent legitimacy to the puppet Assembly by including its leaders in the "Group's" negotiating moves.

Since 1978 the "Contact Group", always with the U.S. representatives playing the leading role, has engaged in frequent talks with the South African regime on the implementation of the election plan (formalised in U.N. Resolution 435), solemnly pursuing every objection raised by the apartheid leaders, however unreasonable. The procedural pattern that emerged has been for U.S. representatives to go to Pretoria first before holding a "Contact Group" meeting. Talking with South Africa has been virtually the whole of "Group" preoccupation; invariably, it has been only when SWAPO leaders and African "front-line" states have protested against being ignored that "contacts" have been made with them.

In "Contact Group" statements, the prospects are always "promising" or "hopeful", the apartheid regime is "more constructive than expected" or is showing "flexibility." This is intended to lull international opinion and to divert attention from the stalling tactics. A trenchant view of "Contact Group" behaviour was given by an assemblage of Protestant and Catholic church leaders from the five countries in the "Group" in May 1982: they demanded that pressure be used to compel South Africa to remove restrictions on elections in Namibia and criticised the "Contact Group" for

failing to threaten South Africa with economic sanctions in its negotiations. "It is likely," said the church leaders, "that the lack of such pressure contributes to South Africa's intransigence."

In particular, the "Contact Group" has kept silent about the repeated, murderous attacks by South African troops on Angola in the name of eliminating SWAPO bases allegedly in Angola, and about the brutal repressive measures perpetrated on the population of Ovamboland in Namibia (the main area of conflict) by South African forces. This, failure, too, has been an encouragement to South Africa to resort to any means to maintain and extend its control.

The "Contact Group," in large measure, has usurped the negotiating process and the working out of procedures in regard to Namibia's independence, putting these chiefly in the hands of the group of western imperialist countries that have most reason to relieve the international pressure against apartheid.

Reagan Takes A Hand

Since the beginning of 1981, when the U.S. Reagan administration took office with an undisguised commitment to war-footing policies and to global confrontation with whoever or whatever is considered to be a menace to U.S. interests, the U.S. role in southern Africa has been more openly expressed. It was outlined by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker (who has been acting as the chief U.S. representative on the "Contact Group"):

"In South Africa, the region's dominant country, it is not our task to choose between black and white. In this rich land of talented and diverse peoples, important western economic, strategic, moral and political interests are at stake. We must avoid action that aggravates the awesome challenges facing South Africans of all races." The U.S. must be neutral to be "in a better position to pursue western strategic and economic interests in the region."

In the present historical period in southern Africa, a proclaimed policy of neutrality, especially by a power like the United States with its enormous economic stake in apartheid, can only benefit the ruling forces, even if carried out. But of course the United States has had no intention to be neutral: Crocker was merely applying cosmetics to the policy.

The substance of the Reaganite policy has been clearly seen in major acts of disruption of the implementation of U.N. Resolution 435. In October 1981 a U.S.-prepared draft Constitution for Namibia was

projected through the "Contact Group". It contained features that would nullify a SWAPO electoral victory and would perpetuate a neo-colonial Namibia.

One provision was for a two-tier voting system under which each voter would cast two ballots, one on a proportional representation basis for national candidates, the other on a straight winner-take-all basis for local candidates. This would work for the benefit of anti-SWAPO parties, or, as the "Contact Group" put it, enable "fair representation in the legislature to different political groups." The U.S.-designed Constitution also had a section on rights, a salient feature of which was "protection from arbitrary deprivation of private property or deprivation of private property without prompt and just compensation." Any change in the Constitution would require a two-thirds majority vote in a legislature of "different political groups."

Such a Constitution was designed to enable the white minority and its tribal chieftain allies to obtain a blocking position in order to thwart a SWAPO programme of government, and to enable the domestic and foreign property-owning minority to hold on to the dominant sector of the economy. SWAPO, of course, rejected the proposals, President Sam Nujoma calling them a device to enable "the Boers to impose a neo-colonial solution." SWAPO told the western powers to abandon their diplomatic intervention and called for "a Geneva-type conference under the auspices of the U.N." to work out the independence process.

The Cuban Factor

The Reagan administration's answer to this was to come out with its most disruptive move to date. It linked the presence of Cuban troops in Angola with a Namibian settlement, insisting that Cuban troops must withdraw from Angola before South African troops left Namibia and before pre-independence elections could take place. In South Africa, Prime Minister Botha promptly endorsed this demand, saying that if Cuban troops were not withdrawn South Africa would go ahead with its own UDI-type of election in Namibia.

Although Assistant Secretary Crocker and other U.S. spokesmen tried to make it appear that the Cuban troop demand was a "Contact Group" position, the other four members of the "Group" sought to dissociate themselves from it. Thus the French foreign minister, Claude Cheysson, declared in Dar-es-Salaam in October 1982 that "the group as a whole has never accepted that there should be such a link and we will never accept it.

If one country makes a link, it's outside the contact group. We see no justification for any request to be put to the Government in Luanda."

The U.S., however, in the latter part of 1982, mounted a major diplomatic campaign in southern Africa to push its Cuban "linkage" line. In the space of a few weeks the special Reagan representative, General Vernon Walters, CIA chief William Casey, Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State Frank Wisner and Vice-President George Bush visited states in southern Africa promoting the "linkage" concept.

William Casey, in Pretoria, advocated a *cordon sanitaire* for South Africa. A few days after his visit the South African Defence Minister, General Magnus Malan declared that South Africa will keep its troops in Namibia and will not tolerate a "Marxist government" there.

The most significant tour was by Vice-President Bush in November 1982. In a policy speech in Nairobi, entitled "A new partnership with Africa," he tied the demand for the removal of Cuban troops with a wide-ranging call for the countries of southern Africa to alter their attitude toward South Africa, toward acceptance of aid like that of Cuban troops, and toward their economic development.

South Africa, he said, "should be involved in shaping the security of southern Africa." On African security in general, he said that the U.S., "will, when asked, support multi-national peacekeeping forces that Africa creates in its own defence." He then proceeded to criticise the socialist-oriented economies in many African countries which he called costly experiments in subsidy systems and public ownership. He proclaimed:

"Now is the time for fresh thinking, an eschewing of old ideologies that have not passed the test of experience. . . . We are prepared to help give African governments the wherewithal and the international political and financial backing, to take the steps where necessary to restructure their economies."

The message was unmistakable. African countries should get rid of assistance from socialist countries, abandon socialist-oriented and nationalist policies of development, and accept the U.S. and South Africa as partners. Especially, the U.S. should be welcomed as a military and economic partner. The key to achieving all this was to support the U.S. demand for Cuban troops to be removed from Angola as a pre-condition for a Namibian settlement. In other words, U.S. imperialism is seeking to use the Namibian question as a key to open the door for itself to a fresh neo-colonial control in southern Africa.

In these manoeuvres, Angola has been made a prime target. A stream of U.S. diplomatic and business visitors have arrived in Luanda in this

period, including a large U.S. businessmen's delegation headed by David Rockefeller, former president of Chase Manhattan Bank. Offers have been made for large-scale U.S. financial and investment aid if Angola would sever its association with Cuba, accept the South African-backed UNITA rebels in the government, and cease aiding SWAPO in Namibia. The U.S. "linkage" line has been publicly rejected by Angolan government leaders and the MPLA, but U.S. interests obviously hope that they can divide the Angolan people with pressures and offers, and thus create havoc in the anti-apartheid alliance of independent African states in southern Africa.

The disruptive Cuban issue has been used by the U.S. to promote its campaign for a stepped-up penetration of African countries, but it is also serving another purpose, within Namibia. South Africa has loudly taken up the Cuban "linkage" as a means of carrying out renewed steps to erect a puppet government under its control in Namibia. Such steps have been considered essential due to the fact that the previous National Assembly established in 1978 and headed by the white minority-dominated Democratic Turnhalle Alliance had fallen apart.

A ramshackle party made up of a rough alliance of 11 "ethnic parties," headed by the wealthy white Dirk Mudge, the DTA has disintegrated, with the various ethnic parties defeating DTA candidates in local government elections. In February 1982 the president of the DTA, Rev. Peter Kalangula, who had urged a unitary party instead of a loose ethnic federation dominated by a white minority, resigned from the DTA, a move that was said to "effectively destroy the DTA as a serious political force," and certainly wrecked it as a viable opposition to SWAPO in an election.

South Africa, in January 1983, finally forced the resignation of Dirk Mudge as head of the puppet council of ministers, and dissolved the National Assembly, assuming direct South African rule. The perspective being set was for the apartheid regime to create a new political party under its control in Namibia.

The fake issue of Cuban troops in Angola has been seized upon by both the U.S. and South Africa to gain the dual ends of apartheid and imperialism in southern Africa. It is an issue that has been rejected and denounced by all of independent Africa and by virtually all the rest of the world. It marks one more unsavoury stage in the ever-more desperate effort to prolong the apartheid system and an imperialist foothold in Africa, a stage that can be overcome by united and determined resistance by anti-apartheid and anti-imperialist forces.

AFRICA NOTES

AND COMMENT

By Du Bois

THE OAU—Reaction continues its wrecking tactics

Efforts to destroy the OAU and African unity have continued unabated since the last issue of *The African Communist* (see No. 92, 1982). The United States Administration, using Morocco — the "gateway" to American dollars — succeeded in sabotaging the second attempt to hold the 19th Summit of the OAU in Tripoli at the end of November, 1982. This was a continuation of American policy in regard to Libya and the progressive forces on the African continent. At the time of the first Summit in July, 1982, the US Administration issued a statement in which it came out firmly against Libya assuming the chairmanship of the OAU in the following terms:

"...If that tradition (the Head of State of the host country automatically becomes chairman of the OAU for the next year — Ed.) were followed in 1982 we would look upon it with deep regret, since we believe Libya to be a most inappropriate spokesman for the peace and regional stability for which the OAU stands and which we wholeheartedly support."

What cheek! Nor was this the first time that the United States had blatantly interfered in the internal affairs of the OAU. Memory is still fresh of the manner in which a previous US Administration tried to block the recognition by the OAU of the MPLA as the legitimate government of an independent Angola after the forced withdrawal of Portugal.

Yet the United States is the loudest to proclaim the principle that there should be no interference in the internal affairs of Africa by any outside powers, and that African problems need an African solution. Masquerading under these false colours US imperialism hopes, of course, to clear the path for its own intervention in the affairs of Africa on behalf of the multinational corporations whose interest in the continent is motivated solely by the desire to extract maximum profits without any regard for the welfare and living conditions of the vast majority of the African peoples.

The real tragedy for Africa is that there are a number of Arab and African states who are willing to cooperate with imperialism in reducing the continent to a profitable appendage of the world capitalist system.

But the United States and its allies whilst succeeding in preventing the official holding of the summit, failed to secure their main objective: to split the organisation and so weaken it in the face of imperialism.

In the event, a final declaration, with the backing of 30 member states, was issued from the unofficial discussions held. Two of the most pressing issues of the African liberation process featured largely in the final resolution — South Africa and Namibia. The resolution reaffirmed Africa's total commitment to the complete liberation of Namibia on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions and unconditionally rejected any attempts by the United States and the similarly inclined members of the Western Contact Group to establish any form of linkage or parallelism between Namibia's independence and the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola.

In regard to South Africa, the resolution noted that the "intensified armed attacks on strategic, economic and military installations" by the African National Congress (ANC) "have ushered in a new phase of the struggle in which the oppressed people's awareness and militancy have reached an unprecedented level". The Reagan Administration's policy of "constructive engagement," opening up possibilities of political, economic and military cooperation with the Pretoria racists, came under special criticism, as did the massive 1.2 billion dollar loan by the IMF to South Africa.

The failure of the 19th Summit to be held officially in Tripoli, although a setback for African progressive attempts to come to grips with the burning problems of the continent, such as the southern African liberation struggles and the racist South African regime's unchecked aggression and violence against the governments and peoples of the frontline states (the Lesotho massacres being the latest episode), was certainly no victory for US

imperialism and its dollar lackeys. But Africa needs to be vigilant against false prophets bearing gifts. Imperialism's machinations will continue. Africa's problem is how effectively to deal with imperialism in all its guises as well as the Trojan horses in its midst.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the OAU. Great strides have been taken since then. Much else remains to be done. One thing is certain: for as long as imperialism maintains a foothold on a single inch of African soil African progress and independence will be threatened.

AFRICA'S DEBTS — The Burden Grows

Africa's economic crisis reflects all the major trends manifested by the western capitalist countries — and some special ones because of the continent's position in the world division of labour and its tie-up with the economies of the capitalist countries. The annual conference of the IMF-World Bank held in Toronto in September 1982 disclosed that Sub-Saharan Africa's current account deficits rose from \$12,500 million at the end of 1980 to \$13,300 million in 1981.

With worsening conditions of trade between Africa and the capitalist countries, rising repayments on previous debts and services (debt servicing cost), falling prices of raw materials and primary products (Africa's main exports and foreign currency earnings) coupled with the rising prices of imports (mainly manufactured goods, machines and technology) from the western capitalist countries, the future looks unpromising. The report by the Overseas Development Institute of London underlines this. The report points inter alia to:

- 1. Over the last 10 years the per capita food production in 25 African countries has been declining.*
- 2. Food imports are likely to double by the end of this decade.*
- 3. Africa's outstanding foreign debts will increase five-fold over the next 10 years.*

Debt and development are the crux of the problems facing African economies. It has been estimated that Africa's repayments of loans and interest on them for 1982 will be as large as Africa's total earnings from the export of primary products, leaving no margin for the diversion of funds for development (see Richard Hall, *London Observer*, 14.11.1982). On average Africa's debt service ratio (the proportion of debt repayments from the total amounts earned from exports) is often as high as 40% —

twice the upper limit of acceptability for developing countries. According to the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), food production on the continent had dropped by more than 10% over as many years and almost 60 million people are estimated to be suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

Raising food production on the continent is a priority for two reasons — to counter the alarming increase in famine and the consequent problems of hunger, malnutrition and diseases related to underconsumption, and also to cut down on the growing food import bill. Yet the problem does not end there. As a primary foreign currency earner for most African countries that do export, increased agricultural production has been subjected to two major restrictions imposed by the capitalist countries' dominance of the world market into which this trade is integrated.

Firstly, most western countries, gripped by economic crisis, have resorted to restrictive trade practices, such as the cutting down of imports to solve their problems of growing unemployment, slow growth and inflation. Secondly, the terms of trade for agricultural products have deteriorated dramatically — by almost 14% between 1951 and 1970 and more since.

These, however, are symptoms of an aggravated economic crisis which Africa shares with the rest of the developing world. The underlying cause is to be found in the exploitative relationship which most African countries have entered into with the countries of western capitalism, both because of the past colonial role and position inherited and the continuing operation of neo-colonial patterns of economic exchange and relations. In short, Africa's burden of under-development and chronic economic crisis is generated by imperialism and the operations of its main instrument of exploitation — the transnational corporations. Already by the end of the 1970's the TNC's controlled one-third of the capitalist world's gross national product and accounted for more than half of all its foreign trade. By the mid-1970's the TNC's, the majority of which are based in the United States, had over 50,000 subsidiaries and associated companies in the developing countries.

Capitalist Penetration

The crisis affecting the world capitalist system, far from putting the brakes on the operations of the TNC's, has given it an added impulse toward penetration of the underdeveloped economies. Foreign investments, dominated by the TNC's, in these countries more than doubled between

1971 and 1980 — from \$43.3 billions to 107.2 billion. The 50 biggest TNC banks increased their assets from \$603 to \$1,448 billions between 1971-1976, extending their branches from 968 to 1,573.

As an illustration of the inequality of economic relations between the developing countries and the capitalist world, dominated as it is by the TNC's, we can examine the state of trading relations. In the period between 1950 and 1970 the prices of manufactured goods imported from the west rose by an average of 47% and as high as 75% on machinery and high-technology equipment. The prices of exported African raw materials rose by only 5%, whilst agricultural export prices even declined by 14%.

Two examples from the African experience will illustrate the significance of this point. Ghana, which relies for 60% of its foreign earnings on the export of cocoa, has been subjected to a drop in export prices of two-thirds in real terms over the last four years. Zambia, which relies on copper for 95% of its foreign earnings, is now producing copper at a loss, because of the depression in the western countries. Zaire, with accumulated debts of £3 billion, is being forced by the operations of the TNC's to pledge the future production of strategic minerals in return for loans to pay off part of its huge debt.

The African continent's problem, like that of the majority of developing countries, is tied up with the world capitalist system. And this means in the first instance the profit-seeking operations of the TNC's.

Until Africa can break out of the domination imposed by the capitalist countries and the TNC's talk of the welfare, well-being and development of the human and material resources of the continent in favour of the people will remain an illusion. Those African states which have deliberately chosen, and are taking the necessary measures to implement people's policies and socialist orientation are showing the way forward. In this they can count on the active political and economic support of progressive states, especially the socialist countries.

The problem facing Africa and the developing countries is nothing short of the restructuring of economic relations on a world scale on the basis of non-exploitation, economic cooperation, mutual benefit and equality. As the late Leonid Brezhnev stated at the 26th Congress of the CPSU:

"Restructuring international economic relations on a democratic foundation, along lines of equality, is natural from the point of view of history. Much can and must be done in this respect. And certainly, the issue must not be reduced... simply to distinctions between 'rich North' and 'poor South'. We are prepared to contribute and are indeed contributing to the establishment of equitable international economic relations".

ZAIRE - African Predator

The signature by Israeli Defence Minister General Ariel Sharon, the butcher of Beirut, of a secret agreement with President Mobuto Sese Seko of Zaire must be cause for great concern in Africa, particularly Angola. Apart from Israel, South Africa certainly must have welcomed Zaire's re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel, thus effectively breaching the OAU boycott established after the 1973 Israeli-Arab war. Israel's close military cooperation with the South African racists is now being effectively extended and represents a menace to central and southern Africa.

For Angola, Israel military presence in Zaire constitutes a direct threat. After all, Zionism's support for the imperialist-backed forces of Holden Roberto, Mobuto's brother-in-law, during Angola's second war of liberation against Savimbi's UNITA, Roberto's FNLA and South Africa, is well known. Ostensibly, the ninety-strong Israeli military contingent, which includes two full generals, was called in by Mobuto to strengthen the country's internal security (against whom?) and to train and support Mobuto's 5000-strong army of the south, based in Shaba province bordering on Angola. Part of the secret agreement included the sale of 8 million dollars worth of Israeli arms to Zaire.

With the South African racist forces and Savimbi's bandits attempting to destabilise Angola from the south, the threat from the north, with Zaire as a base, is being fortified. A strategy of destabilisation by encirclement is being put into operation. The moving forces in this are South Africa, Israel, the United States, and now, Zaire. Israeli military presence in the heart of Africa should leave none of us in doubt regarding imperialism's aggressive intention to maintain the entire region as an enclave of domination and exploitation. It was to protect these interests that French and Belgian, together with Moroccan troops, were flown in by Mobuto when his regime was threatened by the popular uprisings of May 1978.

We can be sure of one other thing: the mass of the workers and people of Zaire will not benefit in any way from the "strengthening of Zaire's internal security" or Mobuto's army in the south: both these arms of Mobuto's policy have in the past been turned against the workers and progressive forces in Zaire in order to maintain one of the most corrupt regimes on the African continent.

Mobuto's personal fortune has been estimated to run into billions of dollars — safely locked away in Swiss accounts. His former Prime Minister, now in exile after his resignation, intimated that Mobuto's wealth could be as much as 4 billion dollars. Whilst the majority of the people live under conditions of destitution, a small group of Zairean families, including relatives of Mobuto, have been waxing fat on the product of Zairean labour. Nepotism and corruption have been rife for as long as the Mobuto regime has controlled the levers of state power in Zaire. At the same time outside interests in the form of multinational corporations from France, Belgium and the USA, operating mainly in the extractive industries, have been allowed to siphon off millions of dollars in profits each year.

Zaire, one of the largest political entities on the African continent (bordering the Sudan in the north and Zambia in the south) is one of the most richly-endowed countries in terms of mineral wealth great enough to provide a basis for significant economic advancement that can benefit its people. It has one of the largest reserves of industrial diamonds in the world and a well-established mining industry developed during Belgium's colonial sway over the country. Apart from diamonds, copper, cobalt and zinc are the main export minerals. Agriculturally, the country has enormous reserves of timber, with coffee as another of its major exports.

Yet the Zairean economy has been on a downward slide for some time now. Inflation has been running at a colossal 50% and the devaluation of the Zairean currency by 40% in 1981 hit the living conditions of the people. Copper production decreased from 463.4 thousand tonnes in 1975 to 425.7 in 1980. Cobalt production remained almost static, while zinc declined from 66.9 to 43.8 thousand tonnes over this period. Manufacturing output dropped from 120.8 (taking 1970 as the base = 100) in 1975 to 88.7 in 1980, and the gross national product slumped from 1054.1 to 950.1 during the same period.

The economy has been in a chronic balance of payments deficit over the same period and Zaire's total foreign debt, consisting mainly of loans from the IMF and private banking consortiums, has grown to a massive £3,000 million. Since 1976 there have been six reschedulings of debt

payments. Further loans are being negotiated merely to meet the interest payments arising from the debts.

Yet Zaire's economic plight is caused by a factor other than the mounting economic crisis of the capitalist economies to which its economy is tied: corruption, personal enrichment and the financial greed of the ruling oligarchy, at the head of which sits Mobuto. The Mobuto regime has now effectively become a threat to Africa and the southern African region, and all of Africa must stand opposed to this dictatorship.

Problems for Rabat-Washington-Mogadishu Axis

American imperialism's grand design of forging a bridgehead of reaction from east to west in North Africa is running into serious problems due to the upsurge of revolutionary action in the Western Sahara (the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic) and in Somalia.

The Polisario Front — the political wing of the SADR — held its fifth congress from within the liberated zones of the Sahrawi region between the 12th and 16th of October, 1982, effectively refuting claims by the reactionary Rabat regime that there is no base of popular support for the Polisario. To prove the groundlessness of Rabat's propaganda, the Polisario invited and received high level representations from Algeria, Mali, Libya and Mauritania. The main thrust of the conference dealt with the further escalation of the struggle for independence by the Sahrawi people against Moroccan expansionism.

The conference also paid special attention to the growing military alliance between the Rabat regime and American imperialism. Following a state visit by King Hassan II to the United States, American economic and military aid to Rabat has grown enormously over the last few years. The number of American military personnel has increased dramatically, as has the sale of military equipment and armaments. This has been arranged through a financial deal amounting to 100 million dollars. In line with American imperialism's strategy to dominate the eastern and western seabords of Africa, the US navy has been granted special facilities by Morocco. This follows hard on Washington's successful negotiations with Kenya and Somalia for special naval facilities for the American navy in Mombasa in Kenya and Mogadishu in Somalia.

The alliance between the United States and Morocco is clearly an attempt by imperialism to tie up the entire region as a "sphere of American

interests" by intervention through surrogate states like Morocco. We will remember that American imperial designs for a *Pax Americana* in the Middle East have been achieved primarily through the bolstering of the military force of Israel and the acquiescence of Arab states such as Egypt. The devastation of Lebanon and the attacks on the PLO were clearly designed to secure the loose ends of the broad American strategy to maintain US hegemony in the Middle East. Rabat's close alliance with US strategic aims means that imperialism not only has a considerable independent military force in the region (the Rapid Deployment Force), but the active support of a number of Arab states.

The Polisario report correctly points out that American intervention has had the effect of encouraging Morocco's continued occupation of certain parts of the SADR and of turning Morocco into a base of aggression against the Arab peoples and the struggles for national liberation. Another thrust of this strategy is the attempt to split the OAU by using Morocco to deny the legitimate right of the SADR to a seat in the OAU, as has been accepted and recommended by a majority of the states of independent Africa. We will remember that this ploy was successfully used by the Rabat regime to wreck the 19th Summit of the OAU which was to be held in Tripoli in July, 1982.

But the Polisario's determination to win by revolutionary force the right to national self-determination under the slogan "the Fatherland or Martyrdom" does not bode well for Moroccan colonial ambitions or American imperialism.

Events on the east coast of Africa point to continuing problems for Arab reaction and American imperialism. The recent upsurge of anti-Barre struggle within Somalia under the direction of the Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF) signals a radical shift in the politics of Somalia. Despite claims by the Barre regime that the attacks launched by the Front on a number of towns and regions were under the control, and had the support of large numbers of Ethiopian forces, it is evident that the resistance has an internal social base with causes embedded in the politics of the Siad Barre regime.

Since the invasion of Ethiopia's Ogaden region and the defeat suffered by Somalia in that conflict, opposition has crystallised around two major issues — the narrow social foundation of the Barre regime, which relies exclusively on ethnic domination to determine policy for the country, and the growing alliance between the regime and American imperialism.

The present upsurge also has its origins in the deteriorating economic situation of the masses in Somalia. Coupled with this has been a growing disaffection on the part of the army with the rule of the oligarchy in Somalia, leading to a number of riots and mutinies by units of the Somali army. One of the major concerns expressed by the new opposition is that the continued conflict with Ethiopia, fanned by American imperialism, is ruinous to the country and serves only to maintain in power a corrupt clique headed by Siad Barre, subservient to the interests of American capitalism.

The seriousness of the present conflict within Somalia can be gauged by the urgent requests from Somali ruling circles for increased military assistance from the United States. This was immediately forthcoming as arms and sophisticated war material were airlifted to Somalia from the United States under a 1980 military agreement between the two governments worth 20 million dollars — in exchange for Somalia's granting the US military and naval facilities.

Whatever Arab reaction and US imperialism is concocting for the north-eastern and western regions of Africa, it is clear that the peoples of these regions are not going to take things lying on their backs, but are determined to reverse the tide of reaction.



A Tribute to Comrade Ruth First

WHY WE ARE WITH THE COMMUNISTS

by Comrade Mzala

"I am happy to say that there are communists in South Africa. . . it is my experience that the Communist Party is the only Party that stands behind us and from which we can expect something," J. T. Gumede (President of the ANC, addressing the Congress of the League Against Imperialism, held in Brussels in 1927).

"It is perhaps difficult for White South Africans, with an ingrained prejudice against Communism, to understand why experienced African politicians so readily accept Communists as their friends. But to us the reason is obvious," Nelson Mandela (Speech at the Rivonia Trial, June 1964).

What can the racist arrogance of the South African regime be likened to? It is difficult to find an example. They tell us not only where we should stay, when to go to sleep, how we should conduct ourselves, but also even with whom we should struggle for our own liberation from them. If this were merely advice we could just dismiss it with a shrug, but in South Africa this "advice" is incorporated in serious Acts of Parliament, the contravention of which carries sentences up to death by hanging. If those who defy this affront to human dignity are forced to leave the country to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, the racist death squads follow them wherever they might be, disregarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned, in order to carry out Pretoria's sentences against its opponents. This has been the fate of Lancelot Hadebe and William Khanyile, Krishna Rabillal and Obadi, Sizinzo Sikweyiya and Ruth First, as well as many others.

When we bury our dead, Communists and non-Communists, all victims of South Africa's terrorism, we are binding ourselves even with the knot of the grave to a common destiny: a liberated and democratic South Africa. Whereas the Pretoria Boers see us as whites, Indians, Communists, Coloureds, Zulus, Xhosas, etc. etc., and desperately wish to have us brand ourselves with these trade marks as well, in our graves there is no such distinction or discrimination; here we are South African democrats, comrades, men and women who have laid down their lives for the salvation of all. And often the question is asked, if our fate is common in the grave, why can it not be common in a free South Africa?

A symbol of the future

"Comrade Ruth," said the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Comrade Moses Mabhida, at the funeral of Ruth First on the 23rd of August, 1982, "will always be for us one of the first citizens of a liberated South Africa. We cover her with flowers and honour her, while her killers live in secrecy and will die in shame. And one day in the not so distant future, we pledge that the bodies of all who died shall be returned to the soil of a liberated South Africa."

One probably does not deserve the privilege of writing a little tribute to Comrade Ruth First, particularly when one considers the fact that we who joined the African National Congress only after the 1976 Soweto uprising, are actually decades away from really knowing her. Her colleagues are our present leaders. When she, together with Nelson Mandela, Lilian Ngoyi, Oliver Tambo, Moses Mabhida and others was active in the campaigns of the 1950s, most of us were not even born yet. Comrade Ruth, however (and this will certainly come as a shock to those enemies of the ANC and the SACP whose propaganda seeks, in vain, to show that the ANC is led by white communists), was at one time a member of an ANC unit in Mozambique of which I was chairman — it was in this unit that I first met her and worked with her, albeit for a short while. Ever modest and disliking any sort of pomposity or pretentiousness, she made her contributions to the unit with exceptional capability and devotion, as a brilliant and seasoned revolutionary activist, educating and encouraging us with her example. We all admired her virtues with profound affection.

This appreciation should be seen particularly against the background that those of us who joined the ANC after having been members of the Black Consciousness movement inside the country (for example I had been a member of SASO), were very sceptical about the sincerity of the whites

who cast their lot with the black man's struggle. Our experience with white liberals in South Africa, those 'beloved friends' who only paid lip-service to the struggle and joined on condition that they were guaranteed leadership positions, made some of us doubt whether there was any white person who could be trusted, who could be a sincere revolutionary and fight his 'kith and kin' because, we used to say, after all, blood is thicker than water. But our experience in the ANC, with Comrade Ruth and other white comrades (some of whom were together with us bitten by the same mosquitoes in our military camps) has proved that even if blood is thicker than water, revolutionary convictions are the thickest of all.

For us in the unit, for example, the colour of Comrade Ruth was as insignificant as the kind of trousers comrade A, B or C came wearing to the meeting. What, maybe, made her quite distinct from the rest of us, was her staunchness to the ANC, her tireless fulfilment of every assignment given to her by the unit (which was mainly composed of young cadres of our movement). When each of us asked: What manner of person is this? What kind of revolutionary is this?, those who knew her more closely replied that Comrade Ruth was a Communist, that it was her Marxist-Leninist ideals that motivated her.

The personal example, attitudes, morality, combativity and revolutionary firmness of those who have been known within the ranks of the ANC to be Communist (whether black or white) have always commanded our respect and support. Because of this, Nelson Mandela confessed in 1964, there are many Africans today who equate freedom with Communism. They are supported in this belief by a legislature which brands all exponents of democratic government and African freedom as Communists.

We can therefore testify, even as national democrats, that Fidel Castro was absolutely correct when he said:

"Ever since the time of the Paris Commune real Communists have been noted for their heroism. In all history no one has excelled them in their capacity for self-sacrifice, spirit of solidarity, dedication, self-denial and readiness to give their lives for their cause.

"... We cannot deny that anyone who struggles to obtain his homeland's independence from colonial or neo-colonial power or for freedom from tyranny is a revolutionary, but there is only one higher way of being a revolutionary in today's world: that of being a Communist." (Speech delivered to the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba).

Now, if our people ask what kind of relations the blacks and whites in a future South Africa will have, let them read the story of Ruth First and how she related to us and we to her. If somebody is keen to know how Communists and non-Communists should relate in the South African revolution, let him learn of the example of Ruth First. To the white community in South Africa, to their "boys on the border", even to Botha and Malan in Pretoria we say: Neil Aggett, Bram Fischer and Ruth First would have lived much longer in a South Africa governed by the Freedom Charter than did Mdluli, Mxenge and Dipale in a South Africa ruled by apartheid.

Communists cannot be ignored

It is a matter of great significance that when the Nazi-inspired Nationalist Party came to political power in 1948, ushering in the unprecedented phenomenon of apartheid, one of its first laws was the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. The Act laid down heavy penalties for defending or advocating Marxist-Leninist ideas. By seeking to destroy the Communists as the main obstacle to their plan to subjugate our people, the Nationalist Party showed that the Communist Party stands for the direct opposite of the theories and practices of apartheid. It was an obstacle so formidable that they could not ignore it.

We in the African National Congress cannot ignore the Communists either, but for quite different reasons. Although the enemy (and this has been common practice by the ruling capitalist class ever since the formation of the first communist association by Marx and Engels) attempts to distort the true intentions of the Communists, using "Hitler techniques of crude lies and horror stories reinforced by jack-boot and torture squad," to quote Alexander Sibeko (*The African Communist* No. 87, Fourth Quarter 1981) and projecting them as an 'alien threat', a 'bogey man', 'Kremlin agents' or even as essentially 'an organisation of whites that in some sinister and mysterious fashion is able to lead the blacks by the nose', we know from our own history of struggle that this racist propaganda is nonsense.

"We can all bear witness that in the context of the struggle against colonial structures, racism, and the struggle for power by the people, the SACP has been fighting with the oppressed and exploited," said Comrade Oliver Tambo speaking on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the SACP in London on July 30, 1981.

South African Communists have made considerable sacrifices in the struggle for the liberation of our people. Communists have suffered the

same harassment as other freedom fighters — they have been imprisoned, hanged, tortured and have fallen in battle. The relationship between the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party is therefore not a sheer sentimental affair, we are not just madly in love. Our relationship is bound by historic cords, it is rooted in our common experience in struggle and, furthermore, it is based on our common objective: the eradication of the colonial state of white supremacy and the establishment of a democratic state. Said Comrade Tambo:

"Ours is not merely a paper alliance created at conference tables and formalised through the signing of documents and representing only an agreement by the leaders. . . Instead our alliance is a living organism that has grown out of our struggle."

Looking at it from another angle, and this is the most crucial and objective, Communists cannot be ignored by the ANC because to ignore them would be to deny that there are two fundamental determinants in South Africa's socio-economic structure: class exploitation and national oppression.

Two hands of the same body

South Africa's mode of production is clearly capitalist. There are highly developed industrial monopolies and the merging of industrial and finance capital. Even the land is farmed along capitalist lines, employing wage labour, and producing cash crops for the market. Hence the presence of a large and well-developed working class, with a history of conscious political involvement dating to before the beginning of this century. The birth of the Communist Party in 1921 thus did not only signify the level of South Africa's industrial development but also the corresponding working class consciousness.

The history of South Africa dates from before the time of its industrialisation. Capital in South Africa came and rested its paws on the naked shoulders of the already wounded labour — stripped bare of the land that had formed the major means of production and subsistence, and wounded in the grim wars of resistance against this dispossession. When Bambatha fought against capitalism's further subjugation of his people, he was only closing a chapter in a history book that already told of colonial oppression of the black race. In the same way, the birth of the African National Congress in 1912 was not only an organisational expression of this fight for self-determination but also of the corresponding level of Black Consciousness.

So that however noble and sincere were the aims of the founding fathers of the working class party in South Africa, that is, "promoting the overthrow of the capitalist system, the outlawry of the capitalist class, and the establishment of a commonwealth of workers throughout the world," they had, nevertheless, sooner or later to reconcile their noble intentions with the South African context of what Lenin meant when he wrote:

"Nothing holds up the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice; 'offended' nationals are not sensitive to anything so much as to the feeling of equality and the violation of this equality, if only through negligence or jest... That is why the fundamental interest of proletarian solidarity, and consequently of the proletarian class struggle, requires that we never adopt a formal attitude to the national question..." (Lenin, "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'," December 31, 1922)

We do not, however, have two South Africas, one capitalist and next to it another, racist. Neither, again, do we have a situation where the people first experience racist domination (at one stage) and later experience capitalist exploitation (at another stage). Instead, these experiences take place simultaneously and in the same arena. It is this reality then that also dictates, as a matter of historic necessity, the alliance of the ANC and the SACP — two organisations fighting basically two features of the same monster.

Even the most communist of the members of the SACP accepts the fact that it is impossible for South Africa to advance to a socialist future without the elimination of national inequality, whilst, on the other hand, even the most nationalist of the members of the ANC (those who go beyond this limit, like the PAC crowd or the 'group of eight', have no place within the ANC) accepts the fact that without an organised working class, meaningful national liberation is only a pipedream.

The strategy of transition to socialism

The transition to socialism is a logical continuation and development of the present revolutionary process in our country, and this proposition, in my view, should be raised to the level of debate even within the African National Congress (whose present documents, be it the Freedom Charter or the Strategy and Tactics, do not anywhere mention the word 'socialism'). Capitalism never did and never can solve the question of nationalities and truly guarantee the inviolability of national dignity. In

our experience with capitalism, we have seen it thriving with national oppression as its tool — it cannot then all of a sudden provide the solution for us on liberation day.

Even if the argument is raised that South Africa is not a good model or an ideal capitalist society (implying thereby that 'good' capitalism can solve the question of nationalities), the fact remains that in developed capitalist countries today, conflicts between nationalities are rooted in the capitalist system itself — in its exploitative, class essence. In pursuit of its mercenary aims monopoly capitalism intensifies not only social but also national oppression. This is the experience in Canada (the French Canadians and English Canadians problem); Belgium (the Flemings and Walloons problem); Ireland (the so-called Protestants and Catholics problem); United States of America (the Chicanos, Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans problem), etc. In these developed capitalist countries, we witness what Lenin saw more than half a century ago, namely, that imperialism "means that national oppression has been extended and heightened on a new historic foundation." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p.408).

Essentially a social problem, the national question is, in the final analysis, subordinated to the general tasks of the class struggle of the proletariat. At best capitalism (in the case of the most flagrant manifestations of national oppression) can only relax national tensions and thereby provide partial or provisional solutions; only socialism guarantees lasting and fundamental solutions to the national question.

It should also be underlined that since South Africa is already a developed capitalist country in which the ownership of the means of production is the monopoly of one national group, the solution of the national question must of necessity deal a death blow to its generator, namely, the capitalist relations of production. Slovo is absolutely correct when he reasons that "the elimination of national inequality, if it is to be more than a mere gesture, involves a complete change of the way in which the country's wealth is appropriated." (Slovo, *No Middle Road*, p. 40).

The special role of the working class in our national democratic struggle (emphasized in both the Programme of the SACP as well as the Strategy and Tactics of the ANC), and the part played by independent working class organisations (including SACTU) in our liberation alliance, open up concrete possibilities for a transition to scientific socialism. Imperialism, of course, is able to find collaborators amongst the black people. In fact, out of fear of the ANC-SACP alliance it is doing so already and allowing some

of them to join with whites in positions of political control of their economy. This strategy cannot be altogether discounted. The fact that South Africa is already developed capitalism does not guarantee our future against neo-colonialist bourgeois democracy, and it is precisely for this reason that we call for the socialist alternative to be placed on the agenda for debate in our movement both at home and abroad. It is time to concretise the meaning of our own formulation in the Strategy and Tactics that calls for "a speedy progression from formal liberation to genuine and lasting emancipation, made more real by the existence in our country of a large and growing working class whose class consciousness complements national consciousness."



A HAPPY MAN

From Conversations With Lenin

By Arthur Ransome, Moscow, March, 1919

More than ever, Lenin struck me as a happy man. Walking home from the Kremlin, I tried to think of any other man of his calibre who had a similar joyous temperament. I could think of none. This little, baldheaded, wrinkled man, who tilts his chair this way and that, laughing over one thing and another, ready any minute to give serious advice to anyone who interrupts him to ask for it, advice so well reasoned that it is to his followers far more compelling than any command — every one of his wrinkles is a wrinkle of laughter, not of worry.

I think the reason must be that he is the first great leader who utterly discounts the value of his own personality. He is quite without personal ambition. More than that, he believes, as a Marxist, in the movement of the masses which, with or without him, would still move. His whole faith is in the elemental forces that move people; his faith in himself is merely his belief that he justly estimates the direction of these forces.

He does not believe that any man could make or stop the revolution which he thinks inevitable. If the Russian Revolution fails, according to him, it fails only temporarily, and because of forces beyond any man's control. He is consequently free with a freedom no other man has ever had. It is not so much what he says that inspires confidence in him. It is this sensible freedom, this obvious detachment. With his philosophy he cannot for a moment believe that one man's mistake might ruin all. He is, for himself at any rate, the exponent, not the cause, of the events that will be for ever linked with his name.

(Arthur Ransome was a British journalist who was in Russia at the time of the October revolution and visited Moscow again in 1918-19. He wrote a number of pamphlets and books on his experiences which provide a remarkable insight into the stirring events of that revolutionary epoch. — Ed.)

ART AND REVOLUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

An Assessment of 'Staffrider' Cultural Magazine

by Robert Fuller

Staffrider magazine first appeared on the South African literary scene in March 1978 and has become what is probably South Africa's most successful literary journal ever. The magazine was established by Ravan Press "in an attempt to respond, as publishers, to the great surge of creative activity which has been one of the more hopeful signs of recent times". It was established to create a forum for the "new writing" which began to appear after the events of 1976 and 1977. In the words of the first editorial, "a feature of much of the new writing was its 'direct line' to the community in which the writer lives. This is a two-way line: The writer is attempting to voice the community's experience ('This is how it is') and his immediate audience is the community ('Am I right?')". The editorial welcomed contributions from writers who write and publish essentially as 'unattached' individuals.

Staffrider is not the first literary journal providing an outlet for black writers to appear in South Africa. Journals and papers such as *Imvo*, *Ilanga Lase Natal*, *Bantu World*, *Drum*, *Africa South*, *Fighting Talk*, *New Age* and *Classic* all served in their times as vehicles of expression for various schools of writing that have existed in the history of South African writing including black writers. The development and demise of these schools are closely tied to historical and political developments in the country and each in turn was and is a reflection of prevailing modes of thought among the oppressed sections of the community. *Staffrider* too is a product of its times and, because it appeared at a moment when a literary movement was seeking an outlet after a period of intense political repression, it

has given new life to a tradition that was almost decimated by sustained fascist assault. In order to see *Staffrider* in its proper context, however, it is necessary to have a brief look at the history of black writing in South Africa.

The first black writer to have a novel published in South Africa was Thomas Mofolo. His novel, *The Pilgrim of the East*, was written in Sesotho and appeared in 1907 but only after it was translated into English in 1920 did it become widely available. His epic *Chaka* was written in 1920 for a Sotho missionary journal and translated into English in 1931.

Rolfes R. R. Dhlomo's work, *An African Tragedy*, appeared in 1928 followed two years later by Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* which depicted the Great Trek from a black point of view. Herbert Dhlomo produced a number of poems in English, the most famous being *The Valley of a Thousand Hills* in 1941, and a play in 1936 about the prophet Nongqawuse, *The Girl who Killed to Save*. A number of other important writers made contributions in the vernacular during this period but their works only achieved wider significance after they were translated into English.

These early writers concentrated mainly on writing novels. Their writing tended to follow the style of white writing of the time and was sometimes motivated by a desire to impress a largely white readership with the degree of learning and skill attained by the writer. Nevertheless, their works expressed indignation at the condition of the black man, although the appeal to the oppressor was in the form of religious or moral argument for a change of heart rather than in demands for equal rights and outright condemnation of the existing order.

In the early 1940's there was a marked swing in the theme of black writing, a swing towards protest. The readership of these early protest writers remained for the large part white and it was towards the more liberal among them that the protest was directed because it was believed that they were the only ones amongst those who had the legal power to effect change who would be sympathetic.

With these early protest writers there was also a change in subject from the historical and rural-based to the contemporary and urban-based. The progenitors of urban black South African literature were Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele. Their works such as *Man Must Live* (Mphahlele 1947) and *Mine Boy* (Abrahams 1946) described the traumas faced by black workers who came to the cities to find work — the conflict of tribal and traditional values with western values.

The genre of this period was the short story because in this form works could be more easily written in the unstable urban environment and be more easily published. With the establishment of *Drum* magazine by Jim Bailey in 1951 a group of outstanding short story writers emerged whose names are now legend. Amongst these were Alex La Guma, James Matthews, Arthur Maimane, Bloke Modisane, Casey Motsisi, Richard Rive and Can Themba. While the magazine exploited their talents by encouraging stories trivialising and sensationalising the misery of life in the townships and shanty towns, it did provide a good training ground for the new school of urban writers. Progressive publications such as *Fighting Talk* under the editorship of the late Ruth First, and *New Age* also served as media for some of these writers in the 50's.

Unlike their predecessors these new writers were realists who accurately portrayed the corrupting and degrading influence of apartheid and white domination. They were aware too of the revolutionary anti-colonial changes taking place on the continent and drew inspiration from this. Very few novels appeared during this period and even fewer plays and collections of poetry.

Into Exile

The political turmoil of the early 1960's and the introduction of increasingly oppressive legislation forced many of the most promising writers into exile. Amongst those who left were Dennis Brutus, Alfred Hutchinson, Alex La Guma, Arthur Maimane, Todd Matshikiza, Bloke Modisane, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi and Can Themba. As a result a large number of autobiographical works appeared which explained to the world what it was like to be black in South Africa. Among the most famous works were *Down Second Avenue* (Mphahlele 1959), *Road to Ghana* (Hutchinson 1960), *Chocolates for My Wife* (Matshikiza 1961) and *Blame Me on History* (Modisane 1963).

While exile alienated these writers from their environment it served to internationalise black South African writing. As most of these writers' works were banned in South Africa they began to write for a wider audience and their condemnation of apartheid became more impassioned.

The 1960's was the leanest period in indigenous black writing. The growth of Black Consciousness thinking towards the end of the decade did not immediately result in a flourish of writing influenced by this perspective. It took several more years before Black Consciousness became the predominant force motivating black writing.

The early 1970's saw a revival in local black literary productions. This time the genre had changed and poetry became the favoured mode of expression. Poetry proved to be the appropriate form of communication under the conditions of intensified fascist restrictions. It is a medium that has many advantages: it appears innocuous and is less bannable because it can be stored in memory and transmitted verbally.

Oswald Mtshali's *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* (1971) was the first collection to achieve acclaim, although from a largely white audience. His provocative poems appealed to the liberal white conscience. The most productive of these new poets was Mongane Wally Serote whose collection of poems, *Yakhal'inkomo* (1972), brought him instant popularity. In 1973 James Matthews and Gladys Thomas produced *Cry Rage*. A major new writer appeared at this time, Sipho Sepamla, who produced *Hurry Up to It* in 1975 and the *The Blues is You In Me* in 1976.

There was a continuity in theme in the poems of these writers and the earlier short story writers. Their content was largely reflective, describing the grim reality of existence under apartheid in the hope that it would enlighten those who had it in their power to do something. Although this new poetry was acclaimed by white readers, its political message was too muted to have any impact on those whose lives it was describing. By the time Soweto exploded in 1976 the position of black writing was as pitiful as it had been at the turn of the decade.

The national revolt against apartheid, beginning in 1976, unleashed a new wave of black writing. Inspired by Black Consciousness thinking black writers began deliberately to address themselves to black readers. The events of the times had shown that little sympathy could be evoked from whites and that so long as a writer's works were being applauded by white critics it was a sure sign that it was playing a passive role.

Mafika Gwala was the writer most responsible for giving black literature this new direction when he published *Jol'inkomo* in 1976. This was followed by works by Sipho Sepamla, James Matthews and Mongane Serote, who had by this time gone into exile in Botswana. All followed the Black Consciousness line in analysing the black experience for other blacks in an attempt to reassess the black identity.

It was at this point in time that *Staffrider* appeared, providing a much needed outlet for those wanting to express themselves after the turmoil of the previous years.

Part of the Idiom of Our Time

What is the meaning of this characteristic South African title — *Staffrider*?

"A staffrider is, let's face it, a skelm of sorts. Like Hermes or Mercury... he is almost certainly as light-fingered as he is fleet-footed. A skilful entertainer, a bringer of messages, a useful person but... slightly disreputable. Our censors may not like him, but they should consider putting up with him..."

Like him or not, he is part of the present phase of our common history, riding 'staff' on the fast and dangerous trains of our late seventies. He is part of the idiom of this time."

Two ideas are brought together in the title of *Staffrider* magazine — a "skilful entertainer" and "riding 'staff' on the fast and dangerous trains". We are living in revolutionary times, fast and dangerous like trains. A 'staffrider' is someone who runs after overcrowded trains as they gather momentum from the station platform and hangs on to the side to secure a passage. The technique requires considerable skill, especially to remain hanging on. Writers writing in our times should be like staffriders: to continue to be able to write (ride) the riders (writers) should develop techniques or styles that will be illusive or deceitful to the censors, so as to remain hanging on — to continue to be writers of the revolution. The hopes of *Staffrider* are embodied in its title. We hope to consider here whether *Staffrider* has in fact contributed coke to the trains' fires, whether its contributors have developed the skill of hanging on to the outside without falling off, or whether they have become mere passengers on the seats inside.

Staffrider from its inception has published contributions from both black and white writers, but the majority of contributors as well as a significant proportion of its large readership are black and for these reasons it is looked upon as pre-eminently an organ for the literary expression of the new school of township-based black writers. Its white contributors have been sympathetic with the ethos purveyed by the journal and this has contributed to its communal spirit.

Short stories form the bulk of the contents of *Staffrider* although poems, graphic illustrations and photographs feature strongly. Some issues have carried excerpts from unpublished novels and plays, and feature articles on literature and culture are common. The majority of its contributors are young and have used *Staffrider* for launching their literary careers. Older literary figures of stature have also made contributions to the magazine.

Names such as Ezekiel Mphahlele, Richard Rive, James Matthews and Nadine Gordimer have appeared in past issues. A unique feature of the magazine which contributes to its communal spirit is the collective contributions from cultural organisations and clubs.

While *Staffrider* caters largely for a new generation of writers whose writing is inspired by post-Soweto thought, it does not represent a break with past traditions. There is an essential continuity in theme with earlier schools of black literature — an abiding concentration on life as it is perceived by those who live under the deadweight of racial oppression. Some critics of black South African literature have described this obsession with apartheid as stultifying — and indeed it is — but it is impossible to conceive of a socially aware black writer writing about anything else than that which influences, and distorts, every aspect of his or her daily life.

The black writer beginning a literary career today is faced with almost insuperable odds. Firstly, the present generation is one which has grown up on Bantu Education, which is not designed to provide the aspiring writer with the mental tools of expression. Secondly, the past two decades have been particularly barren culturally. The writers who rose to prominence in the fifties were all in exile before most of today's young writers could read. By the time they could read the exile writers' works were banned and new writers were cut off from a large part of their literary heritage. As a consequence today's writers are influenced largely by western modes of thought and traditions. Liberalism, which comes in for so much criticism from contemporary writers and critics, has become so infused into black writing that many are blinded to its influences. While many of the basic principles of Black Consciousness are diametrically opposed to the principles of liberalism, the two 'ideologies' share a common idealist philosophical standpoint.

Black Consciousness

This article is not intended as a critique of Black Consciousness as a political philosophy as such but its influence on the writing under consideration cannot be ignored. The influences of Black Consciousness are by no means all negative. On the contrary, the current revival in indigenous black writing is to a large extent due to its influence. Much black writing in the past was addressed to whites or the educated black elite. Black Consciousness has popularised literature for the masses by addressing itself to the oppressed. It has eliminated pretentiousness and given writers a sense of political purpose. The relation between literary

activity and political activity has been clarified for both writer and reader. Black Consciousness also revived interest in earlier black writing and created a pride in black cultural achievements in general.

Black Consciousness is an amalgam of ideas which could only have arisen in conditions of white domination. It is essentially a reactive ideology, a response to feelings of inferiority, degradation and humiliation produced by racial oppression. It does not comprise a coherent system of ideas which aid in the interpretation of reality, nor does it provide direction for those seeking to change reality. This was never the promise of Black Consciousness.

The hope of the protagonists of Black Consciousness was that it would provide black people in conditions of racial domination with a sense of pride in themselves, that it would instil a sense of dignity and worth. The mental liberation it promised was to be the starting point of the political liberation which would follow. Only when black people overcame their inferiority complexes and developed confidence in themselves could change become a reality. Naturally, black people would have to liberate themselves; there could be no truck with the (white) oppressor because this was tantamount to asking the oppressor to overthrow himself.

The school of literary endeavour inspired by Black Consciousness has been termed 'populist realist' by some interpreters of current aesthetic movements. It is 'realist' because of the concern shown by its practitioners to stimulate some sort of practical political response from the readers it is directed at. 'Reality' is portrayed as immediately and as concretely as possible in order that identification is spontaneous and not mediated by interpretation. It is 'populist' because its appeal is to those whom the writer sees as the agents of change — the (black) 'community'. Fiction, poetry and other art forms are tools of the struggle and must therefore not be geared for minority production and reception.

The faith that earlier writers had in the overcoming of the racial divide and in eventual interracial cooperation and harmony has given way to a manner of conceptualisation and expression in rigid racial categories. No significant dialogue is conceivable between these categories. These categories are not identical with apartheid categories: they are on the one hand the people — who are black — and on the other hand the oppressors — who are white.

Black Consciousness writing has inevitably inherited much from liberal writing which has dominated South African fiction in English. The influence is often hard to detect. The contradiction between the free will of

the individual and the demands by society is not so apparent in Black Consciousness writing because the individual represents a social force who is in basic consent with his community. The conflict is more between the will of the community and the forces which prevent its realisation — the repressive white edifice.

Black Consciousness is essentially a petty-bourgeois movement which has its origins among the black intellectual elite. It gained its popularity by appealing to a simplistic call for unity based on skin colour. It was a call which was easily understood by those who lived in a world ordered by colour. It provided too an explanation of reality that derived from the immediately perceptible, that required no deeper analysis of the real forces at work behind apartheid and economic exploitation. The era of Black Consciousness ushered in a black renaissance, when black people began to awaken to their own potentialities, to throw off any feelings of inferiority which may have been generated by the experience of being black in South Africa.

There can be no denying that Black Consciousness played a valuable role in arousing political consciousness, but as with all movements based on the premise that change comes about by first changing peoples' ideas, it ran out of steam. Raising consciousness only increases awareness of oppression, it does not bring it to an end. By failing to provide any solutions to the more important questions of how to eliminate oppression and bring about a more just society, Black Consciousness leads only to frustration. The outlet to this frustration frequently takes the form of spontaneous and undisciplined acts of defiance which the regime is easily capable of suppressing. The apartheid monster can only be tackled and overcome through organised opposition and disciplined action guided by revolutionary political theory.

While it is conceded that magazines such as *Staffrider* cannot promote the views of a particular political organisation, a move away from a position based on the interpretation of reality in racial categories and the adoption of a strategy based on social criticism — on class analysis — would go a long way towards providing readers with an understanding of the social antagonisms which are part of life in modern industrial conditions. Black Consciousness posits an essential unity among the black population, but the reality of the bantustans and other recent manoeuvres by the regime to co-opt blacks has emphasised the serious antagonisms within black society. Any literary reflection of contemporary society which fails to take cognisance of concrete social forces and defiantly adheres to the belief that black-white antagonism is the essential dynamic of South African society, is going to become increasingly irrelevant as it fails to explain the events of the times and give people a sense of direction.

The Stories

Much of the content of *Staffrider* is of a progressive nature and highly critical of apartheid structures. Several issues of the magazine have been banned, including the very first issue. It is obvious that the censors are aware of the magazine's politicising potentiality and that its stories are not intended solely to express the writers' literary capabilities. The ever present threat of the total banning of the magazine undoubtedly forces the editorship to tone down the magazine's political content. Fear of censorship intimidates aspirant writers and cramps the hand. Many of the writers are so affected that they steer clear of the gigantic social and political issues of the day and opt instead for the clichés of the apartheid situation.

The pages of *Staffrider* are replete with stories about pass offices, policemen and prisons. The descriptions of life in the townships portray situations and experiences so mundane and common that they can do nothing to arouse the readers who come from these places, or the censors. While the stated intention of the new writers is to depict the collective experience in order that the mind of the reader should not be allowed to escape from the black predicament, the triviality of many of the stories and the familiarity of the situations force the mind to be deflected.

Some writers and poets tend not to be cowed by the looming threat of the censors and are not afraid to speak out. But these are few and their pieces are widely spread so that they cannot be interpreted as editorial policy. *SAIC* by Zulekha Dinath is typical of some of the more defiant poems which appear from time to time.

*The money-faggoted councillors
dispense themselves
to the tune of stacked notes
sticking to platitudes
like flies to cow-dung
defending, pledging allegiance
and dishing out shit
on SATV
Sloshed up quotes and watery metaphors
and Puerile Pap that entrenches us
in the Laager*

Writing about the aftermath of the 1976 uprising, Paul Hotz in *November '76* captures the nerve-shattered state of an old Afrikaner farmer who is waiting for his death in a mansion in Natal. He is aware that

the revolution has finally come, and has barricaded his house against his imagined invaders.

After the carnival the vacuum will no longer seem to be freedom — it will be recognised for the chaos it is. They will be scared, like children, and will wish us back to shore up their world. No quantity of missionaries, bibles, or schools could civilise them. Remember the Congo, Biafra, Uganda. Without us the country will revert back to the tree. They have no gift for order. They snatch at their pleasures greedily, like children, with no thought for the morrow. They will live to regret our absence.

What a true reflection of a mind infected with racism nurtured by nazi-type ideas of the orderliness of the white man and the disorderliness of the black man.

And what about our own liberation struggle? What is the magazine saying? Next to nothing. If anything it 'staffrides' too much on the revolutionary movement of which it claims to be a part. It is ready to jump off as soon as the ticket collector approaches. One exception is a poem by Matsemela Manaka, *We Have Heard the Blues*.

*orlando blues
moroka blues
soekmehaar blues
silvertown blues
we have heard the booyse's blues
through the RPC sound track
which has zimbabwe liberation on record*

Many more blues have been heard throughout the country since that time, but *Staffrider* does not record them. Writers owe it to society to record the effect which history has on the morale of the people. It is not good enough to dwell on the suffering and pain of the oppressed. They must be given some hope, some vision of the future.

A 'staffrider' must not be a parasite but an agent of change, a courageous rider who steals a passage in dangerous times to give encouragement to those being dragged along the fixed route of the train.

WHY I JOINED THE COMMUNIST PARTY

A WHITE WORKER LEARNS TO KNOW AND LOVE HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN

by B.S.A.

It was 40 years ago — on 8th October 1942 I went to the Johannesburg District Office of the Communist Party of South Africa in Progress Buildings, Commissioner Street. "I would like to join the Communist Party" I said and was ushered into an adjoining office for an interview. A man I recognised as a frequent speaker at the Communist Party's public Sunday night meetings on the City Hall Steps, Michael Harmel, put out his hand. "So you want to join the Party. Why?"

"I am a working man and the Communist Party is a working man's party."

"Is that the only reason?"

"Yes. Communism is for the working man and I am a working man."

"Have you read any of our pamphlets?"

"No."

"What have you read then? And what do you know about the Party?"

"I buy *The Guardian* every week and every Sunday I am at your meetings on the City Hall Steps."

"And?"

"I like *The Guardian*. It tells the truth. And I like what I hear on the City Hall Steps."

"You can join on three months probation."

It was as simple as that. Yet it was not a simple matter. It was the most serious step I had taken in my 24 years of life. At the time I was not aware of how much this step would mean to me in the years to come.

I had just been discharged from the army on medical grounds after seeing active service in the Middle East during the anti-Hitler war. Like my parents I had been a member of the South African Labour Party. "What other party is there for the working man" was the watchword of our home. My father was active in the 1922 miners' strike. Its aftermath remained a long time in our home. The Chamber of Mines, the capitalists, the government and particularly General Smuts were all rotten eggs rolled into one hateful demon, a demon which will never be forgiven for the blood which flowed during the strike or for the execution of strike leaders Taffy Long, Lewis and Hull. This demon was blamed for high prices, unemployment, the 'poor-white' problem and the unfair treatment of the 'natives'.

Like those living around us however, our view of life was warped by the racial environment in which we lived. The racial horizons of our small world hindered us from really knowing our own country and our own people. But in spite of these limitations in our home, poverty was regarded as unnecessary and the wide gap between rich and poor condemned as unjust.

Out to Work

At the age of 15 I left school to earn a living when jobs were few and far between — and only temporary ones at that. I had a number of jobs varying from twelve shillings and sixpence to one pound five shillings a week — and had to provide my own bicycle to boot. In between jobs my mother would see to it that my only suit was spic and span — "will never get a job looking like a 'poor-white'" she would say. It was also drummed into me that when job-hunting polite and good English had to be spoken. In

going from shop to shop, office to office and factory to factory the well rehearsed, tedious sing-a-song-of-sixpence was — “May I see the manager, please . . . thank you,” and then “I would like to enquire whether you have any vacancies, Sir. I am a good boy and am willing to work hard.”

This cap in the hand business really riled my father who would say: “If only people voted Labour then there would be no begging for jobs. We would all have work and at proper wages too.” He would go on to say that in Russia there is Communism and everyone has work — “Why can’t it be like that everywhere?” he would ask. Yes, I thought, why can’t it be like that everywhere. Like most white South Africans the colour bar and the brutal exploitation of the Africans put me in permanent work — I got a job reserved for “whites only” on the mines.

I was now fixed, relatively OK but still not satisfied. If only the working man had the sense to vote Labour, I thought, then things would be better for all. It was then that I started to go to the Communist Party meetings at the City Hall Steps on Sunday nights. At first it was mainly out of curiosity and to pass the time away. But I liked what I heard. It made sense. I admired the way in which the Communists stood up to, and would not allow themselves to be provoked by, aggressive racist abusers and hecklers. My, but those people have got ‘guts’, I thought.

At the City Hall Steps I bought *The Guardian*. First because it was offered to me. Then I became a regular customer that looked for it. *The Guardian* was the first paper that I really read properly. I read, I thought and I learned. Till then my only reading was the *Star* — the sports page religiously, the headlines and sensational murder cases.

When the Second World War broke out I enlisted as a volunteer. In the army there was much discussion on the kind of world we would like to see when the war was over. I relied a lot on *The Guardian*, which my mother sent to me regularly, to help me formulate the ideas to advance in the discussions. Hitler Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The great patriotic heroism and untold sacrifices made by the Soviet peoples in meeting the nazi invader kindled in my heart a flame of admiration which still burns brightly today. Here were peoples knowing what they were fighting to defend and uphold.

Democratically minded servicemen founded the Springbok Legion to promote the idea of a true South African democracy at the end of the war. It was only natural that I should find myself a member and seller of its paper *Fighting Talk*.

It took a long time for the fog of my early limited environment to lift and the seed in my head to germinate. But once it started to take growth I knew that on my return home I would join the Communist Party. And that is precisely what I did.

Joining the Communist Party has made my life worthwhile. It has given me the richness of the scientific teachings of Marx-Engels-Lenin. It has enabled me to really know and love my country and fellow countrymen.

It taught me the real history of South Africa — the heroic wars of resistance by the African people to the successive waves of aggression and penetration by the European bourgeois nations. It made me conscious of and committed to the continuing struggle of my black fellow countrymen against dispossession and enslavement. The Party helped me to see clearly that the key to the liberation of all our working people — black and white — from capitalist suppression and exploitation is the national liberation of the African people.

It has given me the great vision of the new South Africa and new world to come. Joining the Communist Party has given me the honour and joy of working with and loving wonderful comrades devoted to the national and social liberation of our beloved country, to everlasting world peace and to a full and fruitful life for every man, woman and child in our world.

[illegible]

We hold aloft the glistening banner of the World Commune to be, when the class war shall have been for ever stamped out, when mankind shall no longer cower under the bludgeon of the oppressor, when the necessities and amenities of life, the comfort and the culture, the honour and the power, shall be to him who toils and not to him who exploits, when none shall be called master and none servant, but all shall be fellow workers in common.

Manifesto of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at its founding conference in Cape Town, 1921.

[illegible]

BOOK REVIEWS

THE UNACCEPTABLE COST OF WAR AND PREPARATIONS FOR WAR

Disarmament and the Economy, by R. Faramazyan (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981) 172 pages.

The first edition of this book was published in Russian in 1978 and hence coincided with the first special session on disarmament of the UN General Assembly. The consolidation of the political detente achieved by the Helsinki Accords of 1975 required military detente, that is the reduction and halting of armament production in the first place by the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances. This would concretely establish the principle of preventing a world conflagration, a principle understood by the people of the world which requires disarmament. At the time of the UN special session, the May 1978 NATO summit in Washington took the decision, against world opinion, to increase military expenditure annually over the following 15 years.

Military tension, arms production and profits for the munitions firms in the capitalist countries occurred *before* the so-called Afghanistan and Polish crises. The solutions that Afghanistan and Poland have had to employ are necessary measures *because* the war merchants have created and aggravated these two countries' problems into crisis proportions, both to stimulate tension and confusion in the world and, in this atmosphere, to stimulate armament production and new weapons development for the profits of the arms producers.

Faramazyan's analysis of the economic facts of the armaments industry and its effects on the economies of the major NATO arms producing countries and Japan, proves not only the economic desirability of disarmament, but also the necessity for disarmament in order to solve the economic distortions in the major capitalist economies.

Increasing military expenditure distorts the economy even in the highly industrialised countries and retards the fulfilment of the social needs of the broad masses in the capitalist countries in addition to stunting the solution of the urgent needs of the people in the impoverished developing countries. The economic and social consequences of disarmament and military detente will provide security and improved social conditions for all people. Who then has an interest in armament production and in retaining military confrontation and tension?

The author produces data on the financial interests of huge arms producing corporations such as Rockwell International, Lockheed Aircraft, General Dynamics, McDonnell Douglas, Grumman, Newport News, Raytheon and Chrysler in the US. Major armament producers in Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy and Japan also benefit. Vast numbers of sub-contracting companies are involved. These armament producers have a vested interest in the arms orders of their countries and they have become linked with the political establishment in the shaping of the national and defence policies of these countries' governments. It is this military-industrial complex that profits from national military expenditure.

The book contains information from studies conducted by experts from western countries and the UN to show that it is possible to halt and reduce armament and other military expenditure even though the process of redeployment of personnel raises certain problems to which consideration must be given. Funds released from the armament industry would be available for investment in civilian production, creating *more* jobs rather than increasing unemployment which threatens all workers, including scientists and highly trained engineers and technicians in the capitalist countries. Housing, health, education, environmental pollution, care of the elderly and of children and other socially constructive projects could be tackled with funds that would be available.

The People Pay

Faramazyan explains that in the final analysis it is the working people in the capitalist countries who have to bear the burden of paying for

non-constructive military expenditure by their contributions of direct and indirect taxes from which huge proportions are appropriated for defence and other disguised but military related expenses. Increases in taxation have occurred in parallel with increases in military expenditure. Associated with increases in military expenses is inflation, since high arms prices and profits enjoy the advantage of special pricing concessions. State loans that are reflected in adverse balance of payments he describes as deferred taxation which has to be paid for by later generations, since further taxes on the current earnings of the people would be intolerable. These features characterise the economies of the major arms producing countries which are also the chief purchasers of arms.

The author has concentrated on the effect of arms production on the economies of the most developed NATO countries. He also touches on the burden of arms purchases by newly independent countries. Military expenditure for developing countries ranges from less than 1% to 37% of gross national product. The highest armament purchases are also carried out through bilateral military agreements with the major capitalist armament producing states.

Arms sales to some developing countries have an opposite effect to what aid from disarmament would achieve. Africa, Asia and Latin America require aid if the developing countries are to solve the problems of hunger, illiteracy and endemic ill-health. A mere percentage of funds released by disarmament would, according to UN experts, help solve some of these urgent problems that these countries are struggling to overcome.

The Second World War took some 55 million lives. This is just under the combined population of South Africa, Angola, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia which was 59 million in 1979. In 1978 US government agencies published figures that a nuclear war would take at least 140 million American lives. A nuclear war carries the risk of sparing no corner of our planet — hence the issue of peace and disarmament affects every human being everywhere.

From the point of view of South Africans, Faramazyan's analysis applies to our people now bearing the burden of the militarist armament economy of the ruling white minority and the growing power of the military-industrial complex. War hysteria and the arms build-up by NATO run in line with US regional interests which is spelt out by the US administration's policy of "constructive engagement" with the minority South African regime.

A. Bakaya

COMMUNIST PARTIES IN THE THIRD WORLD

The Comintern and the East — A critique of the critique.
The falsifiers of Leninist Strategy and Tactics in the national liberation movement exposed. Edited by Professor R. A. Ulyanovsky. (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978)

This book, a collective effort of Soviet social scientists, is not the first of its kind on the subject. The Comintern's Eastern policy — I prefer to call it the anti-colonial policy — has been a subject of study by many communists and anti-communists. There are many lessons to be learnt.

The book is not only a history of the Comintern's anti-colonial policy, but deals also with bourgeois misrepresentation of this history, concentrating mainly on Asia. Africa is not dealt with and perhaps this is due to specialisation.

Ulyanovsky's contribution on The Great Victory of October 1917, the Comintern and the Social Revolution of the 20th Century is worth special mention, not only because he is an expert on such problems, but also because his insight throws new light on hitherto complicated issues and unknown problems.

The other articles deal with the Comintern, India, China, Indonesia etc. in the 1920's and 1930's, not on the basis of history but in relation to the problems of our times. How did the communist movement view the revolution in Asia in this period? What were its tactics — and this is important for Africa — towards countries with no communist parties? In those days they were called backward countries. What is the nature of the revolution in these countries? What is the perspective or what does the future hold for these countries? These are some of the questions posed though not directly answered and dealt with.

It is an interesting book, especially for those who are used to reading about kings and queens. It deals with some communist parties in what is today called the "third world" and is a very useful collection for any politically minded person.

Ndevuzibomvu

WOMEN'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM — A LESSON FROM AMERICA

Women, Race and Class by Angela Davis. The Women's Press Ltd.
GB 1982.

"I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man — when I could get it — and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman!"

This stirring challenge to both male chauvinism and racist white supremacy thrown down by Sojourner Truth, an ex-slave, in 1851 has been taken up and skilfully put again by Angela Davis. In this collection of essays she challenges many of the assumptions that have become popular in the American women's movement today, tracing their origins through history to the racist and class roots from where they emanate.

The beginning of women's resistance in the United States is inseparable from the struggle against slavery. The slave system defined black people as chattels, no different from other livestock owned by the slaveholder. As beasts of burden no distinction was made between the sexes and all were subjected to a life of hard labour, poverty and physical abuse. When the abolitionist movement began to threaten the supply of slaves, women slaves acquired a new value as 'breeders' — animals whose monetary value could be precisely calculated in terms of their ability to multiply their numbers. This new-found value did not confer on slave women any greater status. Angela Davis writes:

"One year after the importation of Africans was halted, a South Carolina court ruled that female slaves had no legal claim whatever on their children... children could be sold from their mothers at any age because 'the young of slaves... stand on the same footing as other animals'."

An equality in oppression borne of slavery did not allow for the emergence of male supremacy within the slave community. The degradation of men or women slaves was a degradation of all slaves.

Out of this equality in oppression and within the slave community arose an equality in resistance. Women slaves were active in revolts and rebellions, they poisoned their masters, joined maroon communities and fled northward with the same passion for freedom as enslaved men. Anti-literacy laws were far more rigid in the South than in the North. All except two southern states absolutely prohibited the education of slaves, because in the words of one code

"...teaching slaves to read and write tends to dissatisfaction in their mind, and to produce insurrection and rebellion."

Women and men slaves missed no opportunity including the holding of night schools between 11 pm and the early hours of the morning in their struggle to teach themselves to read and write and to break the bondage of ignorance that slavery imposed upon them.

The struggle against slavery within the slave system was complemented in the 19th century by one from without — the abolitionist movement. White women — both working and middle class — were drawn into it, and in it they learnt important lessons about the nature of human oppression and their own subjugation. In asserting their right to oppose slavery they protested against their own exclusion from the political arena. Angela Davis writes:

"They discovered that sexism, which seemed unalterable inside marriage, could be questioned and fought in the arena of political struggle. Yes, white women could be called upon to defend fiercely their rights as women in order to fight for the emancipation of black people."

That Frederick Douglass, America's leading black abolitionist, was also the country's foremost male advocate of women's emancipation in his time, is not a quirk of history, but rather arises from the logic of their experience.

The Class Factor

Central to the history of the women's movement in the United States is its relation to the question of black women and the working class.

The struggle for universal suffrage is a case in point. In the bitter battle for black equality in the post-Civil War period, the women's suffrage movement was split on the question of giving strategic priority to the black man's struggle for the vote. The need for this strategic priority arose from the plight the black community found itself in. Emancipation from slavery brought them little freedom economically or politically. In fact the reign

of terror to which they were subjected far exceeded anything they had experienced under slavery. The winning of the vote was seen as a measure to ensure their very survival, not simply as a right in itself.

The black vote was never posed by the movement for black equality as an alternative to women gaining the vote. On the contrary, Frederick Douglass, when urging support for the right of black men to vote, was at pains to stress that this was only one half of the demand — the other half being the extension of the vote to women. Those who opposed black male suffrage, in sharp contrast, posed the vote for women (and by this they meant white women) as an alternative to the vote for black men. Their campaign drew on the support of notorious racists, such as George Francis Train whose slogan was "woman first, Negro last". Their arguments sank into racist rhetoric and prejudice.

Class interests and the lure of white supremacy broke the potentially powerful alliance between black liberation and women's liberation that the Equal Rights Association represented, though it was not until the last decade of the 19th Century that the fatal embrace of white supremacy engulfed the women's suffrage campaign completely. As Angela Davis puts it:

"When the new century rolled around, a serious ideological marriage had linked racism and sexism. White supremacy and male supremacy, which had always had an easy courtship, openly embraced and consolidated the affair."

The book does not confine itself to history, but analyses contemporary questions posed by the women's movement such as rape, housework, contraception etc., from the point of view of the interrelation of class, gender and race — a perspective which is rare in the literature on and about women. Angela Davis's book provides us with a means of knowing about and learning from the experience of American women whose situation and struggle has many parallels with ours in South Africa.

Letsima

PEOPLE AND POLITICS IN JOHANNESBURG'S MELTING POT

Charles van Onselen: Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914 Volume 1. New Babylon (Longman, London, 1982 £4.95)

Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914 Volume 2. New Nineveh (Longman, London, 1982 £4.95)

The essays in *New Babylon* and *New Nineveh* deal with themes in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand from the discovery of gold to the outbreak of World War 1. According to the author, among the "duties" of the *social* historian is the need to "help stir the raw depths of the city in the hope that Market Street might one day be restored to some of its former glory."

The 'restoration' that follows this enigmatic injunction is cast in the framework of the 'world the mineowners made' in the first three decades after the discovery of gold on the Witwaterstand. Prostitutes, social rebels, the drink traffic and the unemployed bestride this world which for Van Onselen forms part of an "extended and thematically linked exercise in historical materialism". All of which "seek to set the experience of selected groups of ordinary people in Johannesburg within the wider context of the industrial revolution."

Part of the historical exercise, we are told, is to situate these groups of people within the emerging structures of society and "refract their experience through class struggle" to demonstrate how the ruling classes gradually asserted their control over the environment and non-working time of the subordinate classes. While doing justice to structure and process, the author hopes for a result that is "an analytically informed chronicle". The treatment, he notes, should not be too abstract and should be the history of a "warm, vibrant and intensely human struggle of people seeking to find a place of dignity" in a developing capitalist world.

The introductory essay sets the scenario (more than explains structure and process) for the linkages to be made between the 'world the mine-owners made' and the themes of social history in the two volumes. These include *Randlord and Rotgut*, a wide-ranging essay on the Hatherley Distillery and the significance of this monopolist alcohol industry as

agricultural outlet, a means of social control and economic exploitation over African workers and a source of profit for the owners; *Prostitutes and Proletarians*, a less successful means of social control over the larger working class of black and white migrants; *Johannesburg's Jehus*, the chronicle of yet another of Kruger's speculative and monopolist concessions into which international and mining finance poured their investments for Johannesburg's first horse-drawn tramway on the City and Suburban circuit. The tortuous transition from a horse-drawn tram to an electrified tramway which had been designed for a rural bourgeoisie and their capitalist partners took several years of negotiation including a war to establish, to say nothing of internecine class conflicts among the capitalists and an economic war against the older cab drivers who raised the red flag in defence of their cause.

The essays in the second volume, *New Nineveh*, concern the social history of the rebel bandits, the Ninevites, described alternately as lumpen proletariat and landless labourers seeking a return to a passing peasant life. They were social rebels against proletarianisation, pass laws and police and formed gangs that frequented abandoned mineshafts, derelict buildings and caves. They molested migrants from whom they stole their money while they unsuspectingly made their way home from the mines.

In the essay on the political reaction of domestic servants to colonialism (*The Witches of Suburbia*), the Amalaita Movement of Durban and the Rand — an organisation of mixed gender and ethnicity — is described as the original "creative" movement which fought to give its members who laboured in alienated colonisation a sense of purpose and dignity — a sort of "houseboys' liberation army fighting to reassert its decolonised manhood" during the early dawn of proletarianisation.

The other essays on the resistance of poor whites to proletarianisation, and the Zulu-dominated Amawasha of Johannesburg, complete the second volume of these studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand.

What then is at fault in this rigorously documented and rich 'reconstruction' of Johannesburg's early history? For one thing, although it is only a part of the whole that is being recorded, the author's method of situating these themes in a framework that is on occasions pretentious and inadequate, tends to confuse the whole with what are merely *themes* within the total social formation. Process and structure are often lost in the 'vibrant' narrative. All is not always what it *seems* to be. The historian has to get behind the facts and seek out the *mechanisms* to explain the complexities of capitalist contradiction.

Regrettably, not only are structure and process neglected in the wake of the compelling narrative but the author's criteria of relevance and judgement are at times questionable. Just as prostitutes required adjuncts of commercialised sex such as pimps, landlords and clients to carry on their trade — so are associated enterprises in the other, more productive and under-researched trades of early capitalism. Whether peripheral or central to mining, all of these are significant themes for the social historian and although possibly less sensational than those recorded in these volumes, they encapsulate the earliest and most formative experiences of Johannesburg's industrial proletariat.

More pertinently, while much myth is dissipated and sympathy generated for the social rebels of *The Regiment of the Hills* and the phenomenon of the Amalaita or the exploited and exploitative experiences of the prostitutes of "Frenchfontein", what new myths are being propagated and what attributes are being elevated to the level of the heroic? A "lumpen proletariat"! These are pretentious labels for phenomena which the author has rightly discerned as having deeply social

1981

Despite the author's location of the role of prostitution in a developing capitalist system, the tone and formulation of the essay are misdirecting and at times are almost lascivious and moralising when they are not mocking or falsely ennobling. The real vice of prostitution is the system that commoditises human beings and reduces them to commercialised sex. Phrases such as "painted ladies", "hawkers of vice", "the flesh markets" of southern Africa and "the town's first ladies of fortune" are chauvinistic and unworthy, even if their offensiveness is sometimes mitigated by quotation marks.

Although the themes in these two works have been subjected to some criticism — which can only enhance the debate over the methodology of social history — there is much that is of interest to be found here for all who are concerned with the early political economy and social history of South Africa. Readers will be impressed by the scholarship, and these criticisms notwithstanding, will identify with the author's concern for the "intensely human struggles" of people seeking to find a place of dignity in Johannesburg's concentrated crucible of encroaching capitalism.

L.N.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**'FOR THE NATION TO LIVE
THE TRIBE MUST DIE'**

Spectator's reply to Nyawuza

Dear Editor,

The statement 'For the nation to live the tribe must die' arose out of concrete experience and summarised a profound process of popular transformation already taking place. It was not, as Nyawuza implies, a case of an abstract, nihilistic and unscientific point of view being imposed on the Mozambican masses, and far from resulting in the repression of patriotic sentiment, was associated with an upsurge in the voluntary adherence of the masses to the movement of national and social liberation.

From the first days of the armed struggle it was evident that tribal consciousness and tribal affiliation were barriers to the creation of a people's liberation army, and had to be transformed into patriotic consciousness and identification with the nation as a whole. Then when the physical removal of the colonialists was achieved from large zones in the north, very concrete questions were posed as to the kind of power to be exercised in these areas. There were three possibilities: to revive and extend traditional feudal power, to instal a new kind of indigenous capitalist power, or to establish people's power. The first two forms could co-exist easily, but, as practice was to show, people's power was radically inconsistent with both. In the end it was not the persuasiveness of this or that theoretician that determined the matter, but the option made by the

THE SPECTATOR

Bitter experience had taught them that behind the passionate rhetoric of the group that spoke of being authentic to tradition, lay personal

ambition and the desire to step into the shoes of the departing colonialists. In fact most of this group ended up by openly going over to the colonialists, broadcasting for them and even directing bombing raids. Similarly even after the armed struggle had started, the chiefs and indunas continued as a whole to play the role of lackeys for the colonialists. They passed on information, collected taxes, recruited for the colonial army: they imposed cruel punishments on the people, assaulted the wives of absent men and demanded tribute for themselves in the form of food and animals.

Those courageous chiefs who resisted the colonialists were deposed and subjected to cruel tortures before being executed, but the great majority, far from being the focus of patriotic sentiment, represented surrender, abasement and humiliation. You can see their photographs today: elderly men assembled with the colonial Governor, pathetically pledging their eternal allegiance to Portugal, just as their counterparts across the border were bowing and scraping to Smith.

It was not they who represented the heroic traditions of the people, the ancient resistance to foreign domination, but the young revolutionaries of the People's Army, carrying new kinds of weapons, organised in a new kind of way, transmitting new kinds of ideas, and having come from all parts of the country, and not just one or other zone. The relatively few patriotic chiefs who succeeded in getting to the people's army were welcomed with open arms and treated with great respect, not because they were chiefs, but because they were patriots. They are still honoured today.

There were positive as well as negative reasons for destroying traditional-feudal power; in fact, the full flowering of the revolutionary process required such process. Thus women broke from traditional patterns of subordination to their menfolk, left their homes to receive military and political training, to carry weapons and food and to mobilise the people in the villages. The young soldiers cast off the traditional role of merely executing the orders of the elders, and turned themselves into highly politicised agents of the revolution who gave as much weight to study and to growing food as they did to fighting. Only by grouping families into non-traditional co-operatives was it possible to defend them and their production from enemy attacks, and to acquire the surplus necessary to feed the army.

Even the norms of traditional law had to give way to the norms of the revolution. To give an example: a husband and wife separate and are in dispute over custody of the children. The husband claims that in terms of traditional law, the children belong to him or his family as he has paid

lobola. The wife says this would be unjust, since the husband is a drunkard who has given information to the enemy, and that the children should grow up in a patriotic household. The matter is put to the people for their decision, and they side with the wife because they realise and accept that the traditional rules belonged to a society that no longer corresponds with the reality of their lives. The new values are accordingly not imposed on the people, they are 'assumed', taken over, by the people themselves as an expression of the new power they exercise.

The People Take Action

This then is how the tribe is killed. It is the people themselves who strike the mortal blow, and they do so by altering their own lives, by transforming their institutions, transforming their relations of production and distribution, transforming their consciousness and transforming their culture. To kill the tribe is not to kill the language — on the contrary, the language, like all languages, takes on a new dimension as it becomes the vehicle for even richer thoughts. To kill the tribe is not to kill the culture of the people — on the contrary, the establishment of people's power enables song and dance and drumming and fluting and horn-blowing to come out into the open and joyously express the personality of the people; hopefully it also creates the basis for a multi-lingual national literature.

To kill the tribe is not to tell the people what food they should grow or how they should prepare their meals, though it does include the inculcation of new habits, such as boiling water and eating greens ('What do you think, we are goats that we eat raw leaves,' some villagers protested at first). To kill the tribe is to destroy the institutions and ideology of tribalism, not to kill the people who make up the tribe, nor their confidence in themselves. On the contrary, the people emerge less humble, less submissive to fate, and filled with a greater pride in their achievements and their culture. There is no stronger confidence than that which comes from the successful completion of meaningful tasks.

When the struggle is acute and everyone knows a hero, it is not as necessary to evoke ancient heroes as it might have been in the period when action was beginning: and, one may mention, in the front rank of heroes are persons who, like our own Chief Luthuli and King Sabata, willingly forewent the privileges conferred upon them to identify with the people in struggle.

Clearly the process of transformation is an arduous and uneven one, with many setbacks. But the basic developments that started in the liberated

zones have been extended through the whole country. It is a material fact, and not just a piece of wishful thinking, that the institutions of people's power have replaced the institutions of the tribe throughout the country (Mozambicans, incidentally, prefer to refer to tribalism as the ideology and to traditional feudalism as the system). At the same time, national and patriotic sentiment has flourished, and not been diminished by the Revolution. It was the colonialists and not the national movement that tried to keep tribal institutions alive, that began to propose regional autonomy as a form of self-determination, while the revolutionary forces saw the destruction of ethnic divisions as the precondition for national unity and true independence.

The question is raised as to how Soviet experience should be used in relation to Southern African experience. It is precisely because Soviet experience is so rich, so varied and so extensive that it must be employed with great precision and special attention to historical and political context.

In general terms, it seems that the national question presented itself very differently in the Soviet Union from the way it presents itself in Southern Africa. In the Czarist Empire, the rulers of one great nation — the Russians — dominated and tried to russianise all other nations. The Leninist response was to re-affirm the right of all nations to full self-determination, including secession, and to grant to national groups the right to a measure of regional autonomy.

We must note that once the multi-national Soviet Union was established, certain basic norms were progressively extended to the whole country by the Constitution and by the Fundamentals of Legislation, and that these included the outlawing of traditional, feudal institutions of power, and the banning of traditional customs such as child marriage, polygamy and lobola and the wearing of the veil. Some traditions were maintained, especially those relating to language, dance, dress and food, while others were brusquely violated — girls went to school with boys, patriarchal control of the family was undermined, and systems of land tenure and succession were totally transformed. The foundation of nationhood was people's power, not tribal power. One might say that Soviet experience proves that for the multi-nation to live, the tribe must die — this is the central theme of Sholokhov's beautiful novel *Quiet Flows the Don*.

Countries like Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, on the other hand, are not multi-national. In fact one might say that they had no nations at all, or at most, only coloniser nations, and that the problem was to forge a nation, not to free one — in fact, in the case of South Africa, the creation of a single nation, rather than secession, will be the legal form that self-determination will take. What we are seeing in Southern Africa is that instead of it being the nation that fights for self-determination, it is the fight for self-determination against colonial or racist domination that is creating the nation. What are emerging in our part of Africa are new nations that are multi-lingual and composed of people of diverse origin and appearance, sharing a common territory and a common economy, developing a common culture and united by a common consciousness generated by decades of common popular struggle.

Nyawuza tends to adopt an approach towards the Mozambican Revolution that can only be described as robust. Why is it, one wonders, that we are so reluctant to examine and give credit to revolutionary experience in our own Continent, to the special experience of nation-building in Africa under the leadership of the worker-peasant alliance? And why, looking back, are we so loath to acknowledge that class formation and class struggle not only exist today in Africa, but existed even before the arrival of the colonialists, that the true heroes of the past were the artisans and the builders and the farmers, who produced the homes and the food and the weapons of self-defence, and not the kings and queens, who were frequently driven by ambition, involved in intrigues, and incapable of leading the people in united resistance against the invaders? It would be a great pity if we were so lacking in confidence in Africa that we could not take its struggles seriously, that we could not apply the same scientific method in analysing our past societies as we would apply to the societies of other parts of the world, that we could take pride in the way our working masses, properly organised and led, have conducted successful revolutionary struggles, solved difficult problems and not only drawn on the universal principles of revolutionary theory, but enriched them as well. Perhaps it is not too early to say that, for our revolutionary theory to live, for the way to be opened to true popular and national revival, tribalistic romanticism must die, and the people's heroism be given its due place of honour.

(For previous contributions see *The African Communist*, No. 91, Fourth Quarter 1982, and No. 89, Second Quarter, 1982. — Ed.)

WE WILL FORMULATE OUR OWN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Dear Editor,

Re: Article by Eric Stilton — *The African Communist* No. 92.

It is a pity that the Editorial Board is constrained from publishing the names of contributors for understandable reasons. However in the particular case of the article by Eric Stilton — "The Function of Education in the Struggle for Liberation" (First Quarter, 1983), one would appreciate an indicator:

Is the author a member of the South African liberation movement or a supporter?

If the former, then he should be aware that the article to which he lends his name is not really original but a reproduction of what is now referred to in ANC circles as the "Green Paper" whose discussion is to be at the appropriate platform of the forthcoming ANC Education Council meeting — itself to be preceded by a policy statement of the N.E.C. on the exact objectives of SOMAFSCO.

If the author is a supporter, then he has simply allowed his name to be used by the real authors of the "Green Mamba" who, at the first public presentation of that paper, through their spokesman, accused the ANC of "not being revolutionary" and of "pandering to the personal self-centred interests of the students who leave South Africa", whatever their declared motives.

But over and above that, the author(s) of the paper leave much of what they really aim at unsaid or merely hinted at in the paper. Their spokesman was however open enough to declare that the main objection to the SOMAFSCO curriculum is that it will produce university graduates (no matter what field) as opposed to cadres trained in vocational skills like plumbing, crop production, typing etc. This he said despite the information given, that the movement was dealing with these areas separately; that even at SOMAFSCO it is part of the programme to introduce all students to vocational skills with the aim of "streaming" students into those who will take up practical skills immediately and those who will proceed to tertiary institutions according to performance, inclination and the needs of the movement.

The fact of the matter is that the author wants to steamroll the movement into turning SOMAFCO into a Vocational College producing only artisans. However, being aware that this idea is unpalatable to the majority, they have to produce a pretentious paper which at first glance appears "objective", concerned about open discussion of the "serious problem" confronting the liberation movement.

It is therefore not surprising that one finds certain startling and unfounded premises making their unsubstantiated appearance inconsistent with the 'analytic' approach of the paper. Thus:

- (a) after correctly dealing with the problems and disabilities facing the African student as well as the future South African society under the sub-heading "Basic Propositions" (*African Communist* No. 92 p. 57);
- (b) after again correctly pointing out the ways and means the school hopes to develop the political understanding and commitment of the students to the struggle (last para of the sub-heading "A Political Act" — p. 60);

the author boldly dismisses all this with an assumption we are supposed to have accepted, that "the educational strategy" of the ANC "focuses exclusively on the requirements of the post-liberation period" (p.60).

This is then followed by valid arguments demonstrating the erroneous position of such an approach.

The question is, on what basis does the author make his assertion on exclusive attention to the post-liberation phase? Certainly not from the ANC policy document or the practice at SOMAFCO.

The second premise on education being "primarily as a means of compensating for Bantu Education" is introduced in the same way, as an accepted fact (last para, page 60).

By the time the author gets to his third premise (3rd para p. 61) he introduces an element of supposition, obviously aware that the reader may start questioning the authority of his premises.

The incisive expectation is delivered obliquely in the final paragraph of the article. The author first *tells* us that *we* accept that "large masses of Africans hold high expectations that the ANC will provide the exiled youth with an alternative to Bantu Education". However this alternative is not the one spelt out in the ANC policy document, but the one which the author has propounded in his three premises.

He blithely goes on to tell us that his own selected interpretation of the alternative to Bantu Education constitutes "the most important determinant of the ANC education policy".

I am sure we are all agreed that formulating an Education Policy for a pre- and post independent South Africa is no easy task, but at least a start has been made and not even the author disagrees with it. His main worry is that it may not be implemented *correctly*.

Since we have had to swallow so many of the author's assertions as being ours, may I be allowed to attribute to the author my own unfounded suspicions.

The movement may not be able to prepare enough black cadres to pose a serious threat to the thousands of white professionals in South Africa, but those white professionals will not remain protected by a policy of relegating all blacks to the 'revolutionary' vocational skills.

On a broader plane, we who are in the continent are aware and getting tired of the perhaps well-meaning hordes of volunteers from Western Europe and America, who see the solution to Africa's underdevelopment in small-scale industries like 'cottage factories for weaving' and 'canoe construction for fishing'. Why don't they advise us to use pick-axes for our mines which they continue to own by virtue of their expertise and advanced technology?

Those who sincerely want to improve and develop our education policy need not be worried. We shall do so despite these armchair revolutionaries who win resounding victories far away from the battlefield.

KWANELE

EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN STRUGGLE

**From Gagashe Nondaba (ANC Student in the
German Democratic Republic)**

Dear Editor,

The African National Congress considers education to be an important aspect of our revolutionary struggle. The moulding of the new man and woman includes ideological, moral and cultural education in the broadest sense, including the economic, social and political context.

The Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College is giving the necessary and correct education for every South African. This education continues in the bush and also in the enemy territory.

Education must develop and harness the abilities of every member of the African National Congress. It must teach the obligation of each individual to society as a whole. It cannot be separated from work and production, because it is based on the co-operative effort of everyone. Education is the means of guiding human action into a "process of constant social transformation and progress". It is part of the class struggle. It is an important part of the fight against the colonial system, particularly against mental oppression.

The working youth and students are the victims of the Bantu Education Act which the South African regime introduced in 1953. Its aim was to ensure that the black man was a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. At that time our parents took a firm stand against the imposed inferior education which the Bantu Education Act provided for future generations. The elimination of the limitations of Bantu Education must be a priority. One of the biggest crimes of white supremacy has been to hamper the development of the learning and culture of the majority of the people of South Africa.

Education must also help develop the young people's view of life in the true revolutionary spirit. It must strengthen our internationalist attitude and develop our sense of initiative which in turn will help us direct our struggle. As good apprentices we must be the best workers and the best teachers of the coming generation.

It was not and is not wrong for the revolutionary youth of the African National Congress to organise conferences, seminars and round table talks with the Komsomols (Youth organisation of the USSR), the Free German Youth (organisation of the German Democratic Republic), REYA (Youth Committee of revolutionary Ethiopia), Moja wa Vijana (youth in the Republic of Tanzania) and the youth organisations in Latin America.

It is important to share revolutionary experiences and exchange ideas, particularly regarding the policy of the Reagan administration and its threat to world peace.

The role of the African National Congress Youth and Students is to show that one of the objectives of our liberation struggle is to express our determination and dedication as far as our education is concerned.

Bantu Education has had a detrimental effect on people's thinking and behaviour. We never did and never can agree to a separate sort of

education for the African people. We do not want "posh" schools in the Bantustans; nor do we want racist educationalists to prepare our inferior syllabuses with their inferior facilities. We will never agree to Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

The point of Bantu Education is to provide cheap labour for the bosses and it cannot be separated from the general politics of the country. It is part of the entire system of apartheid. The Freedom Charter clearly states that education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children. The linking of theory and practice will help us to assimilate knowledge.

In the words of the Minister of Education and Culture in Angola:

"In the process of armed struggle for national liberation, we learned that education is one of the principal aspects of our revolution — a decisive factor, because to the degree that it triumphs or fails, the new man will or will not emerge".

These words are said as a lesson to us in order to concretise the important role of education in the struggle.

The Doors of Learning and of Culture shall be opened!

OUR YOUNG PEOPLE MUST SERVE THE INTEREST OF THE SOCIETY

From Boy Moremi, Bulgaria

Dear Editor,

Last year the ANC Youth held its historic conference in Dar-es-Salaam where the NEC of the ANC together with the Youth made a complete

overhaul of the Youth Secretariat, adopting new Rules, Rights and Obligations after a thorough discussion by the delegates. This was a great step forward.

At the conference the youth were informed of the problems and difficulties and there was open discussion on justified criticisms. The ANC's experience confirms that the national liberation movement can only fulfil its historic mission successfully when all its organs and structures, down to local branches, are active in shaping and implementing policies serving the interests of the oppressed masses, the working class and the whole nation.

The new structure of the youth — Rules, Rights and Obligations all based on democratic centralism — gives the National Youth Committee and the Regional Youth Committees the right to take part in deciding a wide spectrum of local matters within the framework of the policies and resolutions of the ANC's central organs. This gives the RYC's power to make use of their potential and combine independence with a sense of responsibility.

What is left for the Youth with our new leadership is:

1. To implement the decisions of the conference.
2. To build confidence in the working, fighting and studying youth, hoping that our new structure will overcome difficulties and obstacles that have previously existed.
3. To transform the old racist capitalist tendencies which still exist in our ranks (bourgeois hang-ups) and train our youth in communist morals and proletarian culture.

It is true that we cannot talk of communist morals and proletarian culture before we attain national independence. But we know that there can be no colonialism without capitalism in South Africa so we must destroy capitalism and build a new society free of exploitation of man by man.

It is high time that all young people, both inside and outside the country, should abide by the moral stipulations of the movement, fulfil their obligations and duties in exemplary fashion, serve the interests of society selflessly, be modest and self-disciplined and use their rights correctly. Cases of indiscipline, apathy and all other negative tendencies should be dealt with severely.

All young people are faced with the task of carrying out the decisions of the youth conference successfully. We have to work under conditions that have grown more complex, but we are building our future on a more solid

foundation than ever before. The situation inside South Africa is becoming more difficult for the Botha-Malan regime. The ANC and the Communist Party are together implementing their leadership roles and the people of South Africa have dependable allies in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

The future is ours, young people!



DOCUMENTS

THE MASERU MASSACRE

The following statement was issued on December 11 by the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party

The South African Communist Party condemns with the utmost detestation and disgust the vicious South African army raid on refugee homes in Lesotho in which over 40 men, women and children were murdered in cold blood. Amongst those who lost their lives were members of our Party who had been forced to flee the land of their birth and seek asylum abroad.

The South African military claim that they acted to forestall planned attacks by South African freedom fighters on targets in South Africa during the Christmas period. It is well known that Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the liberation movement, has no military bases in Lesotho. The fact that women and children were amongst the victims of the South African murder gang proves that the targets of the racist attack were chosen indiscriminately.

The aim of the racists in launching this and other similar murderous raids on refugees in the frontline states is not only to strike terror into the hearts of those who oppose apartheid, but also to intimidate and pressurise the governments of all neighbouring states into accepting the domination of the South African regime. We believe that South African aggression against its neighbours, which is escalating at the cost of thousands of lives and endless economic devastation, is sustained with the endorsement of the imperialist countries who maintain a policy of what they call "constructive engagement" with the Botha regime, supply it with all its military requirements, including nuclear knowhow, and defend with their veto power at the Security Council South Africa's continued illegal occupation of Namibia. The racists and imperialists join hands to bring about the recolonisation of Africa.

Speaking in the name of the fighting working class of South Africa, and as a constituent member of the South African liberation front led by the African National Congress, we take this opportunity of assuring the murderous gang who rule South Africa that these attempts to break our will to be free and to crush the forces of liberation are doomed to failure. Our martyrs will be avenged. New fighters will snatch up the weapons of those who fall in battle. The cruelty of the apartheid system is daily bringing tens of thousands of the oppressed peoples into the ranks of the resistance.

We call upon all progressive forces in the world to redouble their efforts to halt the aggression of the racist South African regime, to break the alliance of the racists and imperialists to crush the liberation movements of Southern Africa and undermine the governments of the independent African states.

We demand immediate action to implement the United Nations resolutions calling for the withdrawal of South Africa from Namibia and the ending of the evil system of apartheid. We demand immediate action to halt South African aggression against neighbouring states which threatens full-scale war in Southern and central Africa and must inevitably lead to the extension of conflict on a global scale and the possible outbreak of nuclear war.

We dip our revolutionary banner in salute to our fallen comrades and pledge to redouble our efforts to rid our country of the apartheid incubus and restore to all our people the freedom to determine their own destiny in the manner outlined in the historic Freedom Charter. Our ultimate objective is the creation of a socialist South Africa in which the causes of race and class conflict will be eliminated once and for all.

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